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JESUS CHRIST  
AND  
THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH

FRANK ILSLEY PARADISE



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JESUS CHRIST AND THE  
SPIRIT OF YOUTH

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THE CHURCH AND THE INDIVIDUAL  
CHRISTIANITY AND COMMERCE  
ABRAHAM LINCOLN, DEMOCRAT

P18

# JESUS CHRIST

AND

# THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH

BY

FRANK ILSLEY PARADISE

FORMERLY DEAN OF CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL, NEW ORLEANS, U.S.A.

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## CREDO

I believe in God the Father of all ;  
And in Jesus Christ, Revealer of God and  
Saviour of men ;

And in the Spirit of Holiness, which is the  
Spirit of God and of Jesus ;  
By which Spirit man is made divine ;

I acknowledge the communion of all faithful people,  
In beauty, goodness and truth ;

And I believe in the forgiveness of sins,  
the glory of righteousness,  
The victory of love and the life eternal.



# JESUS CHRIST AND THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH

## INTRODUCTION

### THE SPIRIT OF YOUTH

THE earliest and most familiar historical figure in our outlook upon the larger world is Jesus of Nazareth. He enters into our lives through the open door of the hymns and prayers of infancy. The story of His own babyhood is the first romance to awaken our sympathy and love. Thus, from the beginning, His sacred name is enshrined in an association of tender sentiments.

In later youth, it is true, we come to know something of His life and teaching, through a channel called "Sacred Study," which presents Him to us as the object of our faith and obedience. He is given to us, but we do not win Him. We do not grow up to Him, step by step, nor find Him in our Valhalla of the world's heroes. He is apart and beyond comparison, for He is divine.

There, for the generality of men, He remains. The most appealing Figure in all history is a stranger to our understanding. He is defined for us in ancient formulas, but our life-blood no longer flows through

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the historic words. We are trained, day by day, to think in other terms and to weigh the authority we are asked to accept. We can but feel that He is not with us in our expanding life of knowledge and experience, nor does He fight with us in the stern battles of the world. He shares in the deep loyalty of the heart for the memories of childhood, but to most men He is an emotion rather than a living companion.

Now this world of sentiment is soon left behind. The other world which engulfs our youth closes in about us. The earth is a jealous mother and demands our all. In myriad ways she shapes us for our tasks. We are to live in a great society, and that society imposes upon us its standards, habits, and laws. We are taught and trained for the duties and responsibilities of this present time and place.

This long preparation for life in a vast and complex society is the absorbing occupation of youth. It is common experience that the affairs which most urgently concern our later days and the emotions that most deeply move us are not touched by the naïve faith of childhood. That faith is the "secret garden" of happy memories and dear associations, but it does not bridge the intellectual chasm that yawns between the world in which we live and the world in which the Christian religion was born.

Nor is the enlarging knowledge of the universe in which we live, and the unchanging laws that govern it, the only element of uncertainty that finds lodgment in the mind of our young student. It is indeed true that to the youth of every age life is a succession of interrogations. Each question marks a stage in his journey from the childhood

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world of imagination into the more mysterious world of reality. His path must often lead him through dark and confused places, but his instinct drives him forward towards the open and sun-lit plains. There are dragons in the way and many pit-falls. We seek to armour him with the accumulated store of all that is best in human thought and act, to guide him by the experience of the past, to restrain him by authorities that once held sway over fitful wills. Yet even in placid days we are forced to recognize that youth belongs to its own age and to none other. Of all the vast store of knowledge within his reach he selects only that which will serve his need. He is like an explorer who can carry into the wilderness only a few of the customs and habits of civilization ; to meet new conditions he must make new ways of life.

The van of every generation leaves the dear homeland and migrates to the frontier. But this third decade of the twentieth century is no ordinary time. We see through a glass darkly, but there are ominous signs that a long historical era is drawing to a close. The huge framework of society is quivering, as though a mighty earthquake had shaken the foundations of the earth. The rumble of wars will not be stilled. Suspicion, mistrusts, and fear becloud our sunnier spirits. Our doubts concern the very substance of the higher laws of our being. We question the worth, even the reality, of the most precious achievements of civilization. The most pitiful thing in all the world to-day is its helplessness. A monstrous power of evil holds it in an embrace from which there is as yet no escape. The human spirit cries for help and there is no availing arm.

In such a world our young inquirer sets forth on

## Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Youth

his high quest. He will not go far before he comes face to face with the commanding figure of Jesus Christ. It is not the beloved and intimate Friend of his infancy that he now sees, nor yet the exalted Christ of art and catholic faith. He sees the Creator of an idea of life that is a divine rebuke to the faithless spirit of this moment, an idea that links the generations together for an immortal purpose, and gives to the ceaseless and bewildering movements of history a noble and inspiring interpretation.

For what end is this whirlwind of blind energy, this mighty rushing to and fro, this clash of many strifes, this feverish hastening towards some unknown goal? That is the question which, in some form, sooner or later, presents itself to every student of life. And it is to this question that Jesus gives a rational and intelligible answer in revealing the infinite possibilities of the soul. There is no escape from his presence. His challenge meets us on the very threshold, and His shadow falls on the busiest market-places. The leaven of His doctrine is ever fermenting in the social body of which we are parts, and His white-plumed Figure leads the van in every forward movement for the welfare of mankind. Many evil deeds have been done in His dear name, but wherever even two or three have plotted and planned and fought for freedom of conscience, for justice among men, for truth and mercy and love in human relationships, there also may we see His shining presence in the midst of them. It is not a religious obsession, but a plain fact of history, that the impact of Jesus Christ upon the world has opened up vast tracks of spiritual



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opportunity, of which the wisest of men had never dreamt. He has uplifted and enriched the common life. He has banished the despair of fatalism and filled the soul with immortal hope. He has brought a peace that passeth understanding into desolate hearts. He has made the quest for truth a divine adventure. He has made known the abiding joy of service for others. And most of all He has justified the upward reach of man, as he struggles from lower to higher things.

The true Spirit of Youth rests upon the past, but it looks towards the future. It is sensitive to the seismic disturbances that rumble beneath the crust of our social globe ; but it is unafraid. It well knows that the love of the heart going out to God in reverence and self-surrender, and going out to man in sympathy and goodwill, can bring only peace and fellowship into the confusion of the world. To such a Spirit, Christ grows with its growth. His is the secret of undying youth. No blight of caution, doubt, or cynicism touched the perfect flower of His faith ; nor did the glow of His heart die down. Fearless, trustful, and confident, He moved steadfastly upon His appointed way, greatly rejoicing that He was bringing life and light into a dying world.

His is the most inspiring call to the generous spirits of this clamorous and unsettled age. In Him youth finds its unconquerable Leader through the maze of the tangled web which the selfishness of men and nations has created. " He stands with a patient smile at the gates of the twentieth century, waiting till the lagging people overtake Him. Then He will lead the tired and famishing into His city of love."



## SECTION I



## CHAPTER I

### THE SOURCES OF OUR KNOWLEDGE

BEFORE the end of the second century the place of Jesus Christ in history had become firmly established. All that was known of His life and ministry had been crystallized in the language of a mental world that has passed away. (During the next two hundred years this knowledge was beaten into the authoritative formulas of the creeds that are still the accepted statements of Christian faith.) This fact is one of the tragedies of history. For centuries the genial and attractive figure of Jesus was buried and forgotten ; Christ, the exalted Judge, was lifted far above the reach of human understanding. Only in the mystery of the Sacrament did He condescend to the needs of men.

Doubtless a sense of the aloofness of Christ from earthly interest was, in part at least, the incentive that turned the modern mind towards the "Quest of the Historical Jesus." It was thought, perhaps, that if He could be freed from the wrappings of legends, of philosophies, and of dogmas, in which earlier believers had encased His human body, He might rise again as the object of the soul's wonder and inward joy. The aim was to see Him as He appeared in His own day and among His own people ; to understand His outlook upon life, and to

# Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Youth

discover what it was that won the reverence and love of His earliest disciples.

The study of the sources of the Christian faith became in time a new science of Biblical criticism. In other days the Bible had been treated as a *bloc* of divine truth, revealed to man through inspired agents. The text stood, inviolable, and the aim of scholars was to find in the words a spiritual meaning or to give to them an allegorical interpretation. It was a revolutionary method when explorers after truth began to follow the mighty stream of Christianity upwards towards its source. It is important for us to keep steadily in our thoughts that however far afield these explorers wandered, or however perverse their minds sometimes became, the real object of their adventure was to discover the actual figure of Jesus Christ and to construct a true picture of the scenes amidst which He moved.

From careful study of the four gospel narratives they drew a short outline sketch of a young provincial Jew who, in the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius, appeared in the villages of Galilee proclaiming the coming of the Kingdom of God. The people from all the surrounding country gathered about Him, not only because He inflamed their hearts with patriotic hopes, but also because He possessed a power that brought health and wholeness to the afflicted in body and mind. The common people heard Him gladly, but His pretension of an authority above that of ruler or law soon brought Him into conflict with the governing class. Even at the beginning He spoke as a Herald, who had been sent to proclaim a message from God. But, as opposition grew, His words took on a sterner tone, and

## The Sources of our Knowledge

He denounced the religious leaders of His race for their hypocrisy and infidelity. At last He openly proclaimed Himself to be the Messiah, the Son of God, and for this blasphemy was crucified as a malefactor.

If the story ended here it would have no great interest to us, after so long a passage of time. It was what followed that changed the current of human history. His disciples avowed that He appeared to them in bodily form, as one risen from the dead; that He walked and talked and ate with them, and that He declared He would soon return to the earth in power and great glory, as the triumphant Son of God.

This promise of a second coming interprets the mental state of the disciples immediately after His disappearance. They gathered together in Jerusalem and awaited the great day. From despair, their hearts were uplifted with exaltation and overflowed with love and joy. The time of waiting would be short. Affairs of the moment counted for nothing. They shared their possessions, meeting daily for a common meal, which was followed by a touching ceremony of remembrance. They recounted over and over the words He had said and the wonderful deeds He had done.

As the appearing of Christ might come at any moment, there was, of course, no thought of preserving these sacred memories in a written record. They were but random recollections of personal experiences, shared with one another in that thrilling hour of expectation. Yet these intimate talks, under the expanding influence of intense emotion, must have laid the foundation of all the gospel

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narratives. The disciples were now of one mind. Suffering and love had given them the single eye. The high peaks of their Master's teaching stood out now, clear and distinct. He was the promised Messiah, as He had said, whose wounds and stripes were marks of His divine mission. He had been stricken, smitten of God and afflicted, only that He might come again in glory and redeem His people.

Around this central idea grew the body of the first oral tradition of our Lord's place in history. And what an amazing idea it was to possess the minds of obscure and unimportant Jewish peasants. As it was repeated over and over, and illustrated by the story of His ministry, it became a fixed form of tradition and the Church's first message to the world.

The days passed, and still the Master did not return. But the thoughts of the disciples did not wander from Him. These enthusiasts touched the earth lightly, as though it were but a stopping place on their journey home. Meanwhile the ferment of the faith worked within their souls. They could not keep still nor be restrained. They posted o'er land and ocean without rest, carrying the glad tidings of salvation to the poor and oppressed of every country. And wherever they went little groups of believers clung together, over whom the evangelists watched with unwearying love. When they had gone away they wrote wise and tender letters to their children in the faith, and it is from these epistles that we catch our first glimpses into the earliest Christian society.

When we read these letters, we can feel how weak



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and helpless and lonely were the converts to the Christian faith in that unfriendly world; and how persistent was the temptation to slip back into the old pagan or Jewish life. Too dazzling a light had been flashed upon their unaccustomed eyes. They were mostly poor and ignorant people. They had grasped eagerly the intoxicating promise of Christ's glorious return—and He did not come; in their hearts had been planted a transforming hope—a hope that remained unrealised. The time was not yet when Christ's majesty was fully conceived and His spiritual presence a consolation for every earthly woe. That time did come, but it was after the believers in far-away places had been taught and guided by the writings of those who had lived nearer to the Master.

This is important. In the Christian circles of Palestine the story of Christ's life and teaching had been so often repeated that a body of oral tradition had been formed to which the disciples could turn, with perfect confidence, for knowledge and inspiration. There was no immediate need for written documents. It is probable that even the long discourses we now find in St Matthew's gospel were commonly committed to memory—and memory, in early days, was almost as accurate and tenacious as the printed page.

But the Gentile Christians in distant places had no such helps to faith. Their first, and only, Christian literature was the occasional letter sent them by the evangelists and doubtless circulated among all the neighbouring Churches. It is interesting to note how quickly the minds of the first leaders of the Church adjusted themselves to new conditions. The

# Jesus Christ and the Spirit of Youth

strained attention to Christ's return seemed to give way before the pressing need of caring for the new communities of believers. We cannot tell just when written documents began to appear, but we have the testimony of a serious-minded man named Papias, who was the Bishop of Hierapolis about 150 A.D., that two writings existed then—one a brief and incomplete sketch of Jesus' acts and sayings, compiled in Greek by Mark from recollections of the apostle Peter; the other a collection of the sayings of Jesus, written in Aramaic, and supposed to have been collected by the apostle Matthew. This collection of discourses was called the Logia; and, while it no longer exists as a separate document, its main contents are shown in the passages from the gospels of Matthew and Luke that are not found in Mark—about two hundred verses in all. When we are reading some of the longer sayings of Jesus, especially in the first gospel, it is interesting to know that almost these same words were recited from memory by the earliest disciples in Palestine, and were then written down and translated into Greek for the instruction and comfort of their brethren in distant lands.

## THE GOSPEL OF ST MARK

Probably it was this same motive that inspired the gospel of St Mark. There were many reports of Jesus' acts and sayings current among the Jewish Christians, but no complete and authoritative story of His life. When a young man, Mark had been the intimate companion of Peter and had listened to his wonderful memories while they were still warm with personal love. Many years passed before the gospel

# The Sources of our Knowledge

was written and we cannot know how much of Peter's influence still remained ; or, on the other hand, how far it reflects the Christian thought in the last half of the first century. Certainly the glow of the great apostle's ardent love does not appear in the cold outline in which Jesus' life is sketched. Perhaps the only purpose of the writer was to make a framework, or setting, for the richer material of the long discourses already known. Yet this slight, uninspired biography was of the first importance. It laid down the lines upon which others built the nobler structures of the Christian drama. Matthew and Luke were written by this building-up process, filling in and adding to the framework of Mark with material drawn from other sources. As is well known, the original document of Mark is lost, and our present fragment ends abruptly with the words "for they were afraid." The last few verses were added by a later hand. This gospel is described as a memoir rather than a history.

Dr Burkitt puts the date of St Mark's gospel at about 80 A.D. By that time the Christian Church was fairly launched. The first generation of believers was passing away, but the seed planted by the disciples was springing up in garden patches all over the Roman world. Far removed from the traditions of Palestine these little groups were creating a new kind of human society. They no longer waited for the coming of the Kingdom of Heaven but began to build. They took the colour of their surroundings, but all accepted Jesus as the Lord of this life and of the life to come.

In these small communities there were few persons of importance, yet they soon came to regard them-

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selves as set apart for a great destiny. They did not look upon Jesus as a Teacher of the good life, but as their sovereign Lord, to Whose will their own wills were surrendered and in Whose suffering and triumph they were to participate. We would like to know how this strange, new outlook upon life was brought about. We only know of the activities of the evangelists and of their letters which are preserved for us. There may have been many accounts of our Lord's acts and sayings but we only now possess the short biography of St Mark and such parts of the Logia as are contained in the gospels of St Matthew and St Luke.

But the quality of this first of the gospels arrests our attention and helps us to interpret the time. The writer's interest is not centred upon the Lord's teaching but upon His miraculous acts. The movement of this story is very swift and vivid. There is no doctrinal motive nor reflexion, but marvellous deeds follow hard upon each other. Perhaps we have not the whole original document, or perhaps Mark only planned to supplement the existing Logia. What is more likely, however, is that Jesus is purposely being presented to the Gentile converts in His supernatural aspect ; they are being drawn to Him not for His goodness nor His wisdom, but because of His wondrous works. In the story Jesus passes rapidly from scene to scene, but at each step evidences of His divine power fill the reader's mind with awe. That may be why these scattered Gentile converts, who were not unfamiliar with the idea of "Divus Cæsar," could, at that early day, accept the humble Jewish artisan as the Son of God.

# The Sources of our Knowledge

## THE GOSPEL OF ST MATTHEW

This document came forth from a quite different kind of mind and was born into a very different world. The reader is carried into the very heart of the Jewish system, and the echo of ancient prophecies sounds in every page. Twenty years after the fall of Jerusalem the Christian society had become a challenging body. The blood of many martyrs had been the seed of an harvest, already abundant in devoted followers of Christ. But it is likely that both at Jerusalem, and everywhere among the Jews of the dispersion, the appeals of the evangelists had met the stubborn fact that the promises foretold a royal leader who should restore the glories of David's Kingdom. To this Jewish mind there could be no middle course; either Jesus of Nazareth was that royal Messiah or He was an impostor. That was the vital question in the spread of the gospel among the Israelites, and bravely does this unknown writer set himself to answer it. His was a large theme and he treats it in a large way. Before him, as he wrote, was the recently published narrative of Mark and the much older collection of Christ's discourses, now called the Logia, or "Q." Neither of these, however, dwelt upon his special problem of proving that the scriptures were fulfilled in the historical figure of Jesus of Nazareth. In his use of this material, combining it with Messianic promises from the Old Testament, the author shows great skill. Generally, he follows the outline of Mark and he never strays off the path of true biography. But his selection, his use of details, his way of accumulating sayings (as in The Sermon on the Mount) are very striking. He

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is at great pains to prove Jesus' royal descent. He harmonises every incident in the gospel story with a prophecy long before foretold. Indeed, in these ancient scriptures Matthew traces a clear outline of the career of Jesus, and he warns the chosen people that, except they repent and believe, the gift of God would be taken from them and given to others. Thus Jesus is made to stand as the central figure of a long historical process. The ages had looked forward to the moment of His birth, and step by step the divine plan had prepared the way. Thus the long genealogy of David's line; the miraculous birth in the royal city, the cruelty of Herod upon innocent babies; that a prophecy might be fulfilled. Our modern minds are not sympathetic with this method, but the writer was addressing readers who demanded precedents and the authority of their scriptures. Many a Jew must have yielded to the persuasion of this mature and weighty plea for the Messianic claim of Jesus.

In another decade or two the gospel of St John was to reach a far clearer and wider understanding of Christ's place in human history, but that book was a drama and not a biography.

## GOSPEL OF ST LUKE

In the gospel of St Luke the Christian society seems to have advanced yet another stage in its long journey. We are carried out of the Jewish atmosphere into the Gentile world. We are now in broad daylight. The author is known; his plan is clear and his purpose declared. He sets out to gather and combine material for a large historical



# The Sources of our Knowledge

work, the first two parts of which we now possess, viz. the third gospel and the Acts of the Apostles. Like Matthew, he began his work with Mark's outline and the lost Logia before him, but, while building upon these, he also draws from other sources, unknown to us. In the latter part of the Acts he quotes from a daily diary, written when he was the companion of St Paul upon the memorable journey from Troas to Philippi about the year 50 A.D. That was many years before, for an historical reference indicates that the gospel could not have been written before the last years of the century, when Luke must have been a very old man. He wrote in Greek, with the art of a trained writer and the love of an ardent disciple. But he was something more than that. He is called "Luke, the beloved Physician," and tradition has long declared that he was also a painter, as everyone who has seen Van der Weyden's beautiful picture of "St Luke painting the Virgin and Child" can well believe. But most of all he was, in every fibre of his being, an inspired and worshipping poet.

By the end of the first century, then, there were three widely different accounts of Jesus' life in circulation among the Christian believers. They were different in aim and structure; but the skeleton biography of Mark and the discourses of the Logia furnished the substance of each. These three are called the "Synoptic Gospels" because all three follow the historical order first laid down by Mark.

## GOSPEL OF ST JOHN

In the gospel according to St John we are carried into a different spiritual world. The drama is



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enacted largely in Jerusalem, but the chief Figure, who speaks long and beautiful discourses, has little likeness to a provincial Jew. His language is often mystical and elusive; it no longer paints lovely pictures of the sight His eye at that moment rested upon. The writer has no interest in the order of time but chooses events to support his doctrinal views. Now, it is the point of view that carried the reader out of the familiar scenes amidst which the earliest disciples move. That breathless age, with its hopes and expectations, and then with its lingering disappointment, has faded away. The meaning of the destruction of the Holy City and the scattering of the chosen people is now understood. Their vain dream is shattered. No royal Messiah will come to lift them above the nations of the world. Such a national Messiah Jesus was not; but He was the incarnate "Word of God." He came in the flesh and dwelt awhile upon earth that He might make known to all men the saving and suffering love of the Heavenly Father. He chose the time and place for His appearing, but He was not a Jew. He was the universal Man, the eternal God.

(The philosophy of the East shines through the words of those long discourses which have brought infinite comfort and peace into stricken hearts, but if Jesus Himself uttered them He never could have spoken as in the three earlier gospels.) Perhaps that doesn't matter. At any rate it is insignificant compared to the wonderful fact that within a hundred years such an interpretation of the Galilean Teacher should have become the common thought of the Church. It is a long leap from St Mark's gospel to that of St John and it shows how the mind of the

# The Sources of our Knowledge

Christian society had expanded and matured through profound spiritual experience. If this were not true, the fourth gospel would never have found a place in the Christian canon. There were other and far more historical documents rejected to give place for this latest conviction of the Church as to Christ's unique place in human history. Tradition had now become only so much material to bulwark the doctrines of the great Christian philosophy which was to survive through the ages. (In it the Jewish Messiah fades from the canvas and the Second Coming no longer enraptures the heart.) The Christ of the fourth gospel is God manifested to all mankind in one human Figure, who made known the infinite love of a Heavenly Father and through whom salvation was brought into the world.

The authorship of this remarkable book has been much disputed and never definitely settled. If it was not written by John the Evangelist, in his extreme old age, it must have been written by an unknown disciple of the school of Ephesus. It was certainly known before the year 150 A.D., and about that time was adopted into the official canon of the Church.

These four accounts of our Lord's life and teaching come to us across many centuries with the endorsement of an authoritative body of very early Christians. Together with the Acts of the Apostles, their letters and other epistles, and the great poem of the Apocalypse, they constitute the sacred literature of the Church. Yet they do not exhaust the sources of knowledge which to-day are within the reach of scholars. It is still possible to read parts at least of the Sibylline Oracles, the Gospel of the

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Hebrews, the Gospel of St Peter, and the earliest of the Early Fathers, who wrote in the second century. Tacitus gives a sentence to the punishment of Christus, and Josephus, the historian of the Jews, makes three doubtful references to Him. From Pliny we know that the Christians were already a "pestiferous sect." So that by the end of the first century the new faith had made its way into official notice.

It may be asked in what form the sacred canon had survived through all the upheavals of two thousand years. For the gospels were not graven upon enduring stone, but upon perishable parchment. There are many fragments of these parchments, of varying age and value, which are compared and supplemented in the study of the text. The most important of these was discovered only about fifty years ago by Tischendorf in the monastery on Mount Sinai, where it was used in the monks' chapel as a step to the lectern. It dates from the fourth century and is almost entire. Others are later and less complete. The earlier manuscripts are written in capitals or uncials, and the later in running script or cursives. There are also versions or translations, made at different times, the most important of which is the Latin Vulgate, still the authoritative New Testament of the Roman Church.

The editing and comparing and analysing of this mass of documents has been an immense and long-continued labour, and by that labour the text of our sacred literature has been for ever established. This literature is our inheritance, but even in the first century it took shape and colour from the ideas and conditions from which it came forth. In it, however,

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we approach nearest to that divine Figure who is the object of our search. We know that in the passing of the centuries Christ appears in many forms and speaks in many tones. He comes to us across continents and through the haze of many civilizations. All these we also inherit, and they contribute to the quality of our minds. But the "Quest of the Historical Jesus" is a never-ending pursuit. Each generation is lured on by a faith that it will find in the Man of Galilee the solution of the enigma of life. Hence, in the history of Christendom, He is ever being born again; ever appearing to His watching disciples in a transfigured body. We cannot escape the conviction that if we see Him as He walked in Palestine, we may even now discover Him in the streets of London.

"Ah! never more shall Mary hear  
That voice exceeding sweet and low  
Within the garden calling clear.  
Her Lord is gone, and she must go.

Yet all the while my Lord I meet  
In every London lane and street."

## CHAPTER II

### THE WORLD OF THE FIRST CENTURY

WITH the words: "There went out a decree from Cæsar Augustus," St Luke brings us into a familiar world. To every schoolboy they create a picture of the mighty Empire and of the famous names that live in its history. He can tell us how the Eternal City sat on its seven hills, radiating its power and civilization over land and sea to the far-away horizons of the Empire; how the tramp of Roman legions shook the earth as they carried Roman might to remote nations of the East and to the barbaric tribes of the North and West; of its long story of heroic adventure and its decline in the days of its wealth and luxury. He will tell how, at the moment Christ was born in the distant province of Palestine, an unusual hush fell upon the whole world:—

"No War or Battails sound  
Was heard the world around,  
The idle spear and shield were high uphung;  
The hooked chariot stood  
Unstained with hostile blood,  
The trumpet spake not to the armèd throng,  
And kings sat by with awfull eye,  
As if they surely knew their sovrain Lord was by."

But if the Empire paused an instant in its down-

# The World of the First Century

ward rush, that was not the portentous fact. The fact was Rome, towering over the earth and shaping all the peoples into its own pattern of avarice and cruelty. It stood before the eyes of man everywhere as the form of supreme and triumphant worldliness. The symbol of its power was the long procession of helpless captives who dragged their weary way up the Capitoline Hill and who often represented the learning, the culture, and the wealth of the old civilizations of the East.

This Empire was built to exist for ever ; it seemed the most enduring work of man ; and the victory of soulless, unimaginative, unfeeling might over the achievements of the spirit. Rome, in its later phase, was savagery organized into a terrible machine that crushed its way throughout the earth. It was Moloch that gorged its inflated body with human flesh and blood. To feed itself it developed robbery and slaughter into a scientific system ; it turned the earth into a desert to gather fuel for the devouring flames of its debaucheries ; it made life hideous to noble minds and debased the idle multitude with largesses. It destroyed hope and faith and every high ambition. Divus Cæsar—the symbol of power—became the only God it really worshipped.

With this larger world Jesus came but little into contact, but its poisonous influence penetrated to the remotest hamlet and directly affected the great religious faith which rose out of its polluted soil. Yet it was this evil Empire that became the useful tool of the Christian builder. It had united the world into a single political body and connected all the many parts with the head by a huge network

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of communications over land and sea. It had made the Greek language a common channel of intercourse, even in parts where it was not spoken by the masses. It had gathered in Rome all the races, nations, religions, tongues, and customs of the known world and thus encouraged an international spirit of interest and tolerance. The Eastern cults of Mithra and Isis had prepared the minds of the poor and wretched for the gospel of Immortal Life. These all became helps for the spread of the Christian faith. But meanwhile the great outstanding fact was triumphant Rome, witnessing to all the world that irresponsible Might was the only God whose worship would bring prosperity to men and nations.

The other important fact that intimately affected the ministry of Jesus was Judah. This also is familiar ground to every schoolboy, which grows into a vague memory with advancing years.

Rome, in the time of Jesus, was the capital of the world. Jerusalem was the "Holy City." Each sat high upon its sacred hills, two symbols of the world-forces that are for ever at strife. The one belonged to the present; the other held the future in its keeping. The Jewish trader found a home in every city upon the earth, but everywhere he carried Jerusalem with him. He lived in poverty and squalor amidst splendour and wealth; but his haughty spirit was never tamed, nor his royal lineage forgotten. His praying shawl was a regal robe. This extraordinary detachment from contemporary life was the secret of his power. His spiritual eye was fixed upon the promised Kingdom, and the filthy ghetto faded before the glories of his vision.



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Like the Roman god Janus, the Jew had two faces ; one looked towards the past, the other towards the future. The past was long and crowded with unimaginable happenings. The figures of mighty men of God marked the stages of its progress. Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Ezra, and the host of others, whose names are our household words, had this trait in common, that they obeyed God rather than man. That was the quality of their greatness. The succession stretched through many centuries and embraced all manner of men, but the type remained constant. By faith they wrought wondrously.

Of the many stages through which this remarkable people passed there are three of especial interest to the student of the New Testament. One is the ancient legend of the rescue of the Children of Israel from slavery in Egypt. No human festival has been so long or so faithfully held in pious remembrance as this Jewish Day of Independence. In millions of homes on the memorable "tenth day of the month of Akib," the modern family, dressed for hurried flight, gather around the meal of sodden lamb and unleavened bread. Then the oldest son asks : "Father, what is the meaning of this feast?" and the father relates the thrilling story of how Jehovah, to soften the hard heart of Pharaoh, sent the angel of death sweeping through the Egyptian land to cut off the first-born son in every family. And he tells how their own ancestors were warned of the coming catastrophe and each family bidden to kill a lamb and mark the lintels and door posts with its blood, that the horrors of that night might pass them by. They were to eat the hastily prepared meal, "standing with loins girt, shod in their sandals,

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and staffs in their hands," ready for flight and glory.

The vitality of this impossible legend is one of the miracles of history. Not all the knowledge accumulated through the ages, nor yet the pathetic disasters and humiliations of the chosen people, can dim its lustre. It has been carried over into the Christian system and the sprinkled blood made a prototype of the sacred blood of the Lamb of God. "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."

Another of the epic events of the Jewish past, that mightily influenced the place of Jesus Christ in history, is the reign of King David. It was about the year 1000 B.C., and for a brief period all the twelve tribes of Israel were united under the rule of this adventurous and romantic monarch. We must remember that even in the days of his glory the Jew held only a precarious foothold upon a tiny stretch of land which was the high road between Egypt and the great empires which successively dominated the North and East. The tides of battle swept to and fro over this high road for many centuries, and the Jew, with his singular lack of political instinct, was generally found to be on the weaker side. But David's reign stood out in the dark past as a period of shining splendour and as a promise of the high destiny that awaited the Jewish race. For this David was more than king; he was the instrument of divine purpose and from his seed would arise the Deliverer whose kingdom would embrace all nations of the earth. The last of David's royal line was to be the saviour of his people.

The political fortune of the Jews never again reached the height of glory which imagination in

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later days threw about the reign of David and his immediate successors. As a nation they were destined to shrink into a remote and dependent province, but the invisible Kingdom of God grew in grandeur and splendour before their exalted vision. Patient, enduring, and confident, they awaited the coming of the Messiah in whom would be fulfilled all the hopes and promises of the past.

There was yet a third of those wonderful ideas that moulded and guided the chosen people through its long history. In the eighth century B.C. ten of the twelve tribes had mysteriously disappeared. Two hundred years later Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed the Holy City and carried many of the remaining two tribes into captivity in Babylon. When, after seventy years, this period of humiliation was over, when the city and temple were rebuilt and the rich store of sacred literature gathered and made available for the people's use, then the flame of undying faith in the promises of Jehovah flared forth more brightly than ever. Sometimes the popular imagination beheld Elijah awakening from his long sleep and returning as the oracle of God ; sometimes it was the patient and suffering Redeemer sent to carry the griefs and bear the burdens of the favoured race ; and sometimes it was as a mighty conqueror that the Messiah was to appear and sweep over the earth like a divine avenger.

The heart of the Jewish system was this steady conviction of a Messianic triumph. The past was but a preparation for the coming of the day of the Lord. Wherever the Jew went he carried a proud aloofness from the life about him and a contempt for the powers that ruled over him. The heavy

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weight of barbaric might crushed down his national body, but his spirit was never subdued nor enslaved. Beyond the black clouds that hung over his daily life, at the opening of the Christian era, his imagination saw the shining cohorts of angelic forces and at their head the glittering figure of the Son of Man.

This was the inheritance of Jesus, the background against which His picture must be drawn. Each of the four fragments of His biography reflects some phase of the hope and expectation of the age. The first and third gospels are at great pains to prove His royal lineage and His birthplace in Bethlehem, the city of David. He is, again, the true Passover, of which the marvellous story was but the shadow ; the Lamb of God, sacrificed once for all. He is the expected Messiah who will restore the glories of His race. Moreover, His own mind was steeped in the history and literature of His race. He linked together the past and the future, confirming the prophets and fulfilling their promises. Of Himself he said, " Before Abraham was, I am " ; and again, " Ye shall see the Son of Man coming in clouds of glory."

Thus the two mighty spirit forces of the world were symbolized, in the first century, in the material power of Rome and the exalted patriotism of Jerusalem. But the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed had its seat neither on the Capitoline Hill nor on Mount Zion. It was indeed the negation of the claims of each. His words are clear : " My Kingdom is not of this world," and yet : " all power is given me in heaven and on earth." The seat of His Kingdom is in the loyal heart : " The Kingdom of Heaven

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is within you," and the title with which He addresses the King is : " Abba, Father."

The Messianic claim of Jesus was a challenge to all existing things. He brought no healing balm to the wounded pride of His countrymen. In their eyes He was at once unpatriotic and revolutionary. When He permitted Himself to speak of Rome it was with contemptuous indifference. He recognized no authority but that of God, the source of all human power. He claimed no kinship with David, yet He permitted Himself to be called the King of the Jews. He was the tragic disappointment of His own race and the eternal foe of Rome.

This, then, is the world in which we must search to find the historic Jesus. At every step of His career we shall see Him face to face with the organized power and pride of man. Upon Rome He turned His back, but His heart yearned over His own people. They were His Father's vineyard, He said in one of those flashes of imagination, and in the Lord's absence it had been seized and possessed by wicked servants. The Lord's messengers had been beaten and killed, and now the beloved Son had come, bearing His Father's command, only to find that every road and byway into the vineyard was barred against Him.

What did He mean ? If the vineyard was only the tiny plot of ground called Judah, where the world and the spirit forces were contending for possession, the struggle appears remote and insignificant to the modern age. The simple pastoral life and the fierce religious antagonisms of an eastern race have little enough in common with our intense economic and industrial civilization. If the figure

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we seek is the Jesus of history, battling against the evils and misconceptions of His little world, the story need not long detain us from the absorbing interests of daily life.

But we shall see how the narratives themselves, as the perspective lengthens with the passing years, enter more and more deeply into the mystery of Christ's place among men. Between the gospels of Mark and John stretches an æon of time, as measured in terms of experience. The local and temporal colours in the earliest pictures grow somewhat faint as the glory of the fuller revelation sweeps over the spiritual horizon at the close of the first century. It is not in the Galilean peasant that we shall to-day find the Saviour of this tortured world, but in that universal and divine Figure who has been born again and again into the life of man and whom we have been taught to worship as the Son of God.



## CHAPTER III

### THE GOSPEL OF THE NATIVITY

PRACTICALLY all our knowledge of the human life of Jesus Christ is contained in the four gospels, yet not one of these narratives is a real biography. We must build up our picture of the historical Jesus from the fragments of His acts and words that have been preserved. For the motive of the evangelists was not, as was Boswell's, to make a complete portrait of a man, but to show forth the age-long purpose of God, fulfilled in His beloved Son. Thus the main interest of Matthew, let us say, is to show how this heavenly Messenger came into the life of man, not as an uncredited stranger, but as one foreseen and heralded by the chosen spirits of many generations. That picture was in Matthew's mind and he selects such parts of the gospel tradition as will serve to throw the picture upon the screen of history. When we reach St John's gospel we stand upon a towering peak and our vision pierces the veil of time and space. Biography has taken on the form of drama and the historical Jesus is the human shadow of the Eternal Word.

If our search is only for proved facts of history we shall not go far into the spirit of the evangelists. They called upon other witnesses to the truth of their evangel. Poets had sung of the glad day that now



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had dawned; and prophets had foretold it. The very stones cried out that Jesus was the Messiah of God and the heavens declared it. This was the wonder of all wonders and it was not strange to their minds that the whole universe pulsed with the joy of redemption.

The thrill has not died out of the beautiful poem of the Nativity, as it is recorded in the gospel of St Luke. It is like a lovely reliquary that enshrines the heart we worship. All that the promised Messiah meant to the devout Jew, all that Christ has meant to every generation of believers and must for ever mean, is contained in that treasure. It was the gift of faith to our childhood, jewelled and garlanded with tender memories, and its sacred teaching ever renews itself in wonder and in joy.

The origin of this touching story is unknown, but there is an old legend that when Luke was about to begin the task of writing a full and orderly account of Jesus' life he visited the Virgin Mary and heard from her own lips the marvellous tale of His birth. Matthew also drew upon this or a similar tradition, but in order to bring the Holy Family to Nazareth from their home in Bethlehem he adds the incident of Herod's Slaughter of the Innocents and the Flight into Egypt, of which Luke knows nothing.

Following Luke, we learn that Joseph and Mary were natives of Nazareth, in Galilee, a village not far from the Sea of Tiberias. They were drawn to Bethlehem, "David's royal city," by a census, or taxing, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. In Bethlehem the prophecy of a Messiah, born of the line of David, was fulfilled.

This name, Quirinius, brings us into touch with

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history. He was made governor of Syria about ten years after the death of Herod, in whose reign Jesus was born. The famous census was taken after the year 6 A.D., but it did not include the inhabitants of Galilee. The visit of the Holy Family to Bethlehem, therefore, must have been at some other time and for some other purpose.

This is a difficulty the young student will not seek to escape. He will further learn that the Gospel of the Infancy was apparently unknown, in the Apostolic age, outside of the first and third gospels. We get glimpses into the family and community life, where Jesus appears on the common level, but never again does any ray of light from this sweet story of divine babyhood appear. A later generation framed it into a dogmatic formula.

But it is St Luke who has caught the innermost secret of the Christian faith. He has spanned the little space between the finger of God and the finger of man in Michael Angelo's allegorical decoration in the Sistine Chapel. The motive of each of the evangelists is to declare the divine Sonship of the human Being known in history as Jesus Christ ; and, perhaps, Luke borrowed from older religions an established symbol of that mysterious mingling of flesh and spirit, of time and eternity, just as John, with the same high motive, borrowed the symbol of the " eternal Word " from the philosophy of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew.

In later times the whole vocabulary of symbolism, even the most barbaric figures of Oriental splendour, were employed to express the glory of the enthroned Christ. It was a true instinct that impelled the Christian poet to draw one imperishable picture—

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and one only—of God manifested in the weakness and helplessness of infancy.

The Gospel of the Infancy opens the Christian drama and is linked to it as a prologue to the scenes that are to follow. The narrative frames and supports a lovely shower of prophetic poetry, as the slender mullions of Sainte-Chapelle frame and support the glory of its jewelled glass. The reader is carried into the temple sanctuary, into simple village homes, on to the open hills among the flocks, into remote lands and the palace of Herod, and to the cradle of the enchanted Child in the city of the great king.

It is a royal birth. Ancient hymns of praise and gladness come forth, unbidden, from pious lips. A multitude of the heavenly host gleam in the midnight sky and fill the air with their songs of ecstasy. Far away in the mysterious East devout sages hear the call, and, guided by a dazzling star, haste o'er land and sea to pay tribute to the divine Prince. No less an ambassador than Gabriel, the Archangel, is selected to bear the proclamation that God has come to dwell among men. A forerunner, John the Baptist, was to make ready the highway for our God, and the glory of his royal mission attended his birth. What transports of hope and faith and love and joy flood the hearts of these saintly Israelites. The great day has come, not stealing quietly, unheralded, above the horizon, but trumpeted forth to the four corners of the earth, and shouted from the skies.

And then the eye turns from this glittering pageant to the opening scene of Gabriel on his mission to the hillside village where the sweet maid awaited her summons. And as the mystic words

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were uttered she gave the perfect answer, " Behold the handmaid of the Lord : be it unto me according to thy word." Once again the spirit possesses her and her soul sings into the soul of Elizabeth the immortal canticle :

" My soul doth magnify the Lord  
And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour  
For He hath looked upon the low estate of His hand-  
maiden,  
For behold from henceforth all generations shall call me  
blessed."

This is not history, but it is undying truth. St Luke the poet has done for us what no mere chronicler of events could ever do. He has revealed the secret power of the Christian faith.

Through this chaplet of verses we can penetrate into the heart of Jewish-Christian society of very early times. For these poems come forth from Hebrew soil and express the pathetic longing for national deliverance that haunted the Jewish mind from generation to generation. They are racial, and not individual outbursts of the triumph of faith, and they may have been the first hymns in the worship of the Christian Church. They express, in dramatic form, the hope and exultation of those who were only a little way removed from Christ and who still held Him in bright and passionate memory.

Yet we have seen that the prologue appears to have been unknown to the Apostolic age. We also know that the first intense days of the Christian Church were occupied in eager waiting for the second coming of the Lord ; and we read how, at the gatherings of disciples, the singing of hymns was

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a part of worship. These hymns may well have been the outpourings of Messianic longing in earlier times, which, in the serener atmosphere of the second Christian generation, found their truest interpretation in the world-wide view of Christ's mission to mankind. To that age the Gospel of the Nativity would seem to belong.

Through this passage of exquisite imagery the young student enters the temple of the Christian faith. It will seem strange to him, perhaps, that never again does the beautiful story reappear. Such an heavenly visitation must, he thinks, have left an unforgettable impression upon those who witnessed it. The Anointed One must have been marked among His fellows for His high destiny. And Mary must have walked the earth, like a goddess, in a cloud of awe and wonder.

The gospels give us no hint of these things. By a single step Jesus comes into the light from a profound obscurity; His divine mission is unknown to His closest followers until His ministry is drawing to a close. This is very strange; but the attitude of Mary is unaccountable. In later times she became the Queen of Heaven—rivalling her Son in power, and the object of chivalrous and adoring devotion upon earth—but only once does she appear in the public ministry of Jesus, as it is recorded in the first three gospels. She came to Capernaum with His brothers, when first He began to meet the antagonism of the scribes, and sought to take Him back to the obscurity of her home—for she believed He was “beside Himself.” After thirty years the Star of Bethlehem had burnt itself out, but only to shine again in the art and poetry of the Christian Church. Where

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other voices are stilled, St Luke's rises clear and strong through myriad channels of expression. He speaks : " I sang to you a hymn of praise and thanksgiving for the redemption of mankind. I heard the jubilation of all created things over the birth of the Son of God. Before my eyes appeared strange figures from the far ends of the world, bent in adoration and awe before God, revealed in human helplessness and innocence. This wonder I saw—and worshipped."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE HOME IN NAZARETH

UNLIKE Paul, Jesus was born in a mean city. A stigma was attached to its name. It was then, and still remains, an unimportant village, clinging to the hillside, about half-way between the coast and the southern point of the Sea of Tiberias. Galilee itself, with its provincial temper and its mixed population, was not in good repute among the aristocracy of Jerusalem, and Nazareth was held in no honour even in that province.

Yet it was a place to feed the imagination of an ardent Jewish boy. Just above the houses of the village was a little plateau where the eye sweeps over many of the most sacred scenes in the history of Israel. It is a view of almost the whole physical world Jesus knew. There He must often have sat and brooded upon the romantic history of His race.

The lovely plain of Esdraelon, flaming into a riot of colours in early spring, lay stretched out just at His feet. Above Him rose Mount Tabor. Towards the horizon were the peaks of Carmel, Megiddo, Gilboa, and Endor. On the north stood out the splendid pile of Hermon, with the pagan city, Cæsarea Philippi, at its base; while towards the



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south the highlands of Samaria suggested the road to Jerusalem. Below He could see the creeping caravans bearing merchandise between Rome and the unknown East.

The village itself offers little attraction to the visitor to-day. The steep streets remain, paved with cobble stones, and with footpaths raised high on either side. There is the ruin of Mary's well, where she must have gone with her water-jar in the cool of the evening and gossiped with her neighbours. Travellers still speak of the beauty that Mary, Queen of Heaven, bestowed upon the daughters of Nazareth, and of their unusual gentleness and sweetness of manner. The village itself was probably a mere huddle of huts, without design or beauty, each hut consisting of a single room, in which the whole family lived and worked.

The family of Joseph and Mary, of whom Jesus was the eldest, appears to have been a large one. Five brothers are mentioned by name and reference is made to several sisters. But there is some confusion on this point and tradition does not support the earliest narrative. The "Lord's brethren," of whom James was a distinguished member, were certainly not His own brothers and were probably children of a sister of Mary who bore the same name.

"The blessed James, Bishop of Genoa" in the middle of the thirteenth century, wrote a book called the *Golden Legend*, which enjoyed for a time a far greater popularity than the Bible. By the exercise of a lively imagination he makes all this confused matter clear. Anne, the mother of the Virgin, was three times married, and by each marriage had a

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daughter whom she named Mary. The eldest was married to Joseph, and Jesus is the only child mentioned. The second married Alpheus and had four sons, named James (the minor), Joseph, Simon, and Jude. The third married Zebedee, and her two famous sons were James and John. This is a bold flight of fancy, but it passed for history nine hundred years ago.

Our picture, however, is fairly clear. It is that of a devout working-man's family, living together in closest intimacy and in the most frugal manner. Joseph is called the Carpenter, but Jesus' parables suggest that the trade He followed with Joseph was that of a general builder. In a community where luxury was unknown, and where abject poverty did not exist, there could be no pretension of wealth nor abasement of poverty. This peculiar simplicity and freedom of life greatly influenced the later teachings of Jesus. His detachment from the world was an easy step. He speaks of king's houses and of rich vineyards as though He had read about them in fairy tales. His mind is never confused by the complexities of social responsibilities. He would be fed like the birds of the air ; clothed like the lilies of the field. Rome, and its terrible problems of civilization, was far removed from the Galilean village.

Yet life, for the boys of Nazareth, was not all freedom. Education was highly valued among the Jews, and every community had its synagogue where the children learnt the hard lessons of the law on week-days, and on the Sabbaths listened to its interpretation by the Rabbis. This sacred law was the supreme intellectual interest of a Jewish mind, and

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the little boys studied it and other parts of the Old Testament in their own peculiar manner. Sitting cross-legged upon the earthen floor, and, swaying backwards and forwards to the rhythm of the words, they chanted long passages from memory in a minor monotone, just as Eastern boys are doing to-day. They studied no languages, no science, no history, but their own. There were no books to be read, no arts to be cultivated, no sports to be followed. But, on the other hand, their minds were filled with noble ideas and their imaginations stimulated by inspired poetry.

This training is apparent in Jesus' utterances. One would look in vain for any sign of what we call culture. His mental horizon was limited to the literature of His own race. The schools play no part in His understanding. What the synagogue gave Him was a wonderful instrument upon which His own genius played, to the marvel of the ages. It is not only the glory of His thought that fills our souls with awe, but also the delicacy, the charm, the perfection, in short, of the images in which He flashes His thought upon His listeners.

Yet perhaps the absorption of Jesus' mind in the story of His own race has tended somewhat to dissipate the attraction His figure makes upon us. We are more at home in the history of the great world, of which Jesus knew nothing. Our interests are scattered over a wide field and the one language we never learn is that in which Jesus' fancy played about the adventures, the hero-tales, the poetry, and the laws of a singular people. Palestine was but a tiny place; and its golden age, in David's reign, was long before the history of Rome began. The one

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literature which occupied the whole of Jesus' mind was saturated with ideas of a coming deliverer who should restore the fabulous splendours of David's kingdom. We, who have watched great empires rise and fall, who have followed the procession of mighty men of valour and of genius, as they have moved across the stage of history, cannot share the Jewish enthusiasm for the primitive Shepherd King.

Herein lies the miracle of miracles. Jesus' contact was almost wholly with people of His own race and religion. Even if He was able to converse in Greek He was utterly ignorant of Greek art and culture. We have no record that He ever moved more than a hundred miles, north or south, from His village home. Yet the wisdom of all ages and of all races seem to meet in Him. Right about Him, He saw the common symbols of eternal truth and beauty which He wrought into incomparable pictures.

It must not be forgotten that the gospels we possess record but a small fragment of Jesus' life. Dr Burkitt reckons that the shortest estimate of His public ministry was four hundred days, but that the stories of not more than forty days have been preserved for us. Moreover, His career is linked to no important events which would preserve it in history and hand it down through association; on the contrary, it was He who immortalized the moment in history and the names of those who were His companions. These are facts that no student can ignore.

We must return to the scenes of Jesus' boyhood. With the exception of one incident, the gospels of the New Testament are silent concerning all the long

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years of preparation. But a legend-loving age filled in the blank space with creations of its own riotous imagination. The Gospel of Thomas has preserved some of the miraculous acts of the little Boy between the ages of five and twelve. The least offensive and the most familiar is the story of how Jesus and His companions were modelling clay sparrows upon the Sabbath day, and upon being rebuked for this desecration He clapped His tiny hands and the clay turned into living sparrows which flew away. Trained as we have been in the fine reticence of the true gospels, these unworthy fables leave a painful impression ; but, historically, they are important as registering the mind of a certain class of Christian believers in the first century.

One incident, however, that is full of charm has found a place in the accepted tradition and it gives us a pleasing picture of Jewish provincial life. The bond of union between the widely scattered parts of the Jewish race was the annual visit to Jerusalem to offer a sacrifice in the temple there. What this yearly pilgrimage meant to the boys of Nazareth we can easily imagine ; when a goodly company of relatives and neighbours walked down the hillside into the flowering vale of Esdraelon, then over the hills of Shechem into the harsh country of Judea, past the old sanctuaries of Shiloh and Bethel ; until, at the last station before the Holy City, voices, young and old, burst into the beautiful chant :—

“ O how amiable are Thy dwellings, thou Lord of Hosts.

My soul hath a desire and a longing to enter into the courts of the Lord ; my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

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Yea, the sparrow hath found her an house, and the swallow  
a nest where she may lay her young ; even Thy altars,  
O Lord of Hosts, my King, and my God.

Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house ; they will be  
always praising Thee."

The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem was about eighty miles, and the company were together on the road for four or five days. Few pilgrimages like these have ever been undertaken, combining so much delight of movement through a changing landscape, with social pleasure, a holiday freedom, and a serious purpose. Arriving at Jerusalem these provincial rustics were plunged into the bustle and variety of a great cosmopolitan crowd, gathered from all quarters of the known earth, and hemmed into the narrow streets of the city.

It was on one of these festivals when Jesus was twelve years old that we catch our only authentic glimpse of His boyhood. The feast was over. The caravan had set out for home and gone a day's journey when it was discovered that Jesus was not in the company. Joseph and Mary hastily retraced their steps, and, after anxious searching, at last found Him sitting in the midst of learned men and discussing with them the intricacies of the law. To Mary's impatient question for the reason of this inconsiderate action He makes the naïve reply, "Know ye not that I must be in my Father's house ?"

Again it is St Luke who draws the curtain aside and gives us this interesting glimpse of Jesus' boyhood. The incident reveals more than it expresses. It is a picture of childhood, of its training, occupations, and interests, in a Jewish community.



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Even to a boy of twelve the study of the law and the problems arising from the law was the one intellectual pursuit. And if a boy was forward in his study he became an object of admiration and hope. It may have seemed strange to this Boy that His mother should have had any doubt of His whereabouts or any questioning of His purpose. He was where He belonged and seeking what He most eagerly desired.

The incident has also an interest which arises from the parallel story in the youth of Buddha. He, too, was lost and sought for by his parents, who found him at last under a tree, whose shadow had not moved during the whole day, surrounded by five sages and saints, and glorious as the moon is among the stars. To the anxious father's questions he made an authoritative demand, "Cease thy ploughing, O my father, and seek higher." He, too, returned home and was subject unto his parents.

All this is redolent of the East, mystic and inscrutable, and it accentuates the long distance of time and space over which our faith has come to us. We would like to penetrate the darkness which envelops the life of Jesus before the beginning of His ministry. We would like to look into the intimacy of His domestic circle. Was He distinguished in His little community for wisdom, for leadership, or for sweetness and charm of nature? This is legitimate curiosity. The picture the evangelists draw of Him is that of an overwhelming personality. He is not only masterful; He is kingly. But there is not even a hint that He made any such impression upon His neighbours during a period of over thirty years. Galilee was an inflammable place, expectant of the



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Messianic coming and ready for a leader in revolution. But Jesus was a prophet without honour in His own home and His high claims were met with suspicion and distrust. His Messiahship was a mockery to their pretension and long-cherished hope.

What manner of Man was He during those thirty years? Art has stereotyped Him—made Him smooth, clean, and effeminate. Perhaps unconsciously, we preserve the tradition. We are saturated with pious sentiments which have turned Him into a middle-class hero. He is a meek and passive victim in a great mechanical scheme, fore-ordained to die to appease the vengeance of outraged Deity. His purity is so delicate that no filthy thing can touch Him. He has the fastidiousness and the sort of moral aristocracy which distinguishes those who have been protected from evil. He has been appropriated by the respectable and order-loving class—has entered at last into “King’s houses” and His figure enshrouded in “Soft clothing.” He is the supreme head of one social institution and the prop of our whole system of civilization. His worship is associated with beauty and dignity, in splendid temples, and is glorified by the creative arts of man. His name has been exalted in all the earth until his real figure is lost in clouds. Jesus, the beloved Master to His disciples, was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. That which arose and ascended unto God was the Christ of human worship and adoration.

Between this glorification and the man of Galilee there is not much likeness. His actual place in His generation was among the obscure and simple people

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of a provincial village. We may believe that His craftsmanship was worthy of the respect of all skilled and honest workmen. His wants were few and His mind untroubled by the cares of this world. His friends could not have been selected for their worth, but were the mixed associates of common life. His hands must have been those of an artisan, and He must often have been wet and dirty in following His trade. He knew nothing of art, nor of social refinement, nor of moral aloofness. By his associations, He would be regarded to-day as a man of common tastes. His temper was that of a social innovator, and He seems never to have tried to win the favour of the influential.

Out of that long silence comes no voice to indicate that the young workman had any interest in the great questions which inflamed the hearts of His countrymen. The Roman guards were encamped even within the Holy City. Their rule was despotic. Slavery was cruel and massacre not unknown. The Roman might was peculiarly irritating to the proud and elevated spirit of the Jews. Did Jesus have no share in this feeling of national degradation? It is perplexing that He gives no lead in the absorbing interests of life. His detachment is extreme. He speaks later as if He had no recognition of economic laws or of the necessities of life which influence human action. There is no sign that He regarded the rules of Justice as beaten out by experience. There is always something above—a divine law of relationship—the motive power of which was an overwhelming love. His heart is with the failures of life—the outcasts and sinful and weak.

The mystery remains how such a Figure, pro-

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claiming so unworldly a doctrine, ignoring the fundamental rules of economic and social life, should have won ascendancy over the complex and practical Western world. The answer to this question must be the subject of our inquiry.

## CHAPTER V

### THE HERALD

“IN the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Cæsar ” —that is in the year 28 A.D.—all Judea was startled by the preaching of a new prophet. It was known that he had come down from some mountain fastness where he had lived a solitary life of meditation and prayer—following perhaps the austere rule of self-discipline and of spiritual communion practised by the Essenes sect—and had proclaimed himself a messenger from God. Even his appearance was like that of one of the famous prophets of Jewish history. He was clothed in a rough garment of camel’s skin and ate only the locusts and wild honey of the wilderness. This was in itself suggestive of the great past, but when he spoke it seemed to the excited listeners that Elijah had awakened from his long sleep and was again announcing a divine message. Centuries before, in “The Book of the Coming of the Lord,” such an appearance had been foretold. It was a command, sent out by Jehovah to His chosen people—the voice of one that crieth : “Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord ; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” The new prophet believed himself to be that voice, and the people came out from Jerusalem and all the country round about to hear his message.

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Such a man is worthy of attention wherever he appears in history, whether his name be John, or Peter the Hermit, or Francis of Assisi, or Savonarola, or Luther. By such names we register the great epochs in human progress.

In the Christian drama, John the Baptist filled the place of the chorus in the Greek tragedies. He came with all the authority of a herald, but he knew that his mission was only to prepare the way for coming events. He felt himself to be a chosen instrument of God, but perhaps he did not realize how delicately his soul was attuned to the inarticulate spirit of the people. A generation later, St Luke drew a true picture. He was the miraculous child of the passionate Messianic hope of his age, dedicated by pious parents to the service of God. Then he disappears from our view and we know but little of his life's history. Very early in his career he must have withdrawn himself from the society of his fellows and broken away from every earthly tie. He had exacted of himself the extreme rigours of a hermit's life, gaining complete mastery over natural desires and passions. At a great price he had won freedom of spirit. His selfish instincts no longer dominated his course. He was a solitary, withdrawn from human companionship and from worldly interests. Alone, on his mountain crag, he had communed with God and wrestled with the powers of evil. His spiritual body must have borne the scars of many a wound inflicted in many a hard-won battle.

John is by no means a unique figure, but he must be numbered among the great. In understanding, in fearlessness, in singleness of purpose, he was the

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master-spirit of that dying age. This is a great mystery. By withdrawal from the world he was brought into closer contact with it. By victory over every earthly desire he became the supreme interpreter of the national hope. It seemed as if some whisperings of coming events reached his ear, upon that mountain top, long before they were heard in the noisy city streets. He was a sensitive medium through whom the unseen spirit-world was communicated to the world of sense.

That was the background against which we must see this striking figure. He caught and held the eye, while his words were a flaming fire which burnt into the soul. "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," he cried, and quivers of excitement spread through the crowd. For this message the most pious and the most patriotic of the Jews had long waited. More than a century of agitation and revolt had sanctified the hope of national greatness; and now this man, bearing all the marks of a prophet, was proclaiming that the day of redemption was drawing near. But these expectant people listened in vain for the words their hearts longed to hear. John spoke with extraordinary vehemence, as though he was predicting a terrible calamity. The Day of the Lord was to him not the day of national deliverance but the day of divine judgment upon a faithless people: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" And then he utters the fearful prediction: "And now also is the axe laid unto the root of the trees; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire."

The supreme event in John's short public career

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was the coming of Jesus Christ. Rumours of the great revival in the wilderness had spread over all Palestine. In far-away Galilee, Jesus had already begun to preach, and the ferment of religious awakening was arousing the souls of the people. Many were drawn to the Jordan to hear the new prophet, and among them Jesus one day appeared. What reason impelled Him to join the throng we are not told, but the Gospel of the Hebrews gives a quaint turn to the story. It explains how Mary told Him that John was baptizing for the forgiveness of sins, and added that "we will go up and be baptized of him." To this Jesus protested that if He had ever committed sin it was through ignorance and therefore there was no reason why He should be baptized. But this is clearly the reflection of a later generation. Jesus was an intimate part of the religious movement that preceded His own activity and was drawn into its centre by an irresistible attraction. John was now at the height of his fame. His resemblance to the prophets of history, his detachment from worldly interests, and his stirring words of denunciation or appeal had aroused the sleeping consciences of the people. To understand the atmosphere in which Jesus found Himself when He reached the Jordan we must translate the popular emotion for the Messianic coming into the dynamic words that have expressed the soul-life of nations and races in modern times. Men who have dedicated their all to such compelling ideas as liberty, justice, truth, or civilization can clearly appreciate the waves of emotion that swept through that little Jewish province.

All our sources agree upon the strange scene that



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followed upon the baptism of Jesus. According to the fourth gospel, John had no sooner beheld the unknown figure of the Nazarene than he cried out in ecstasy : " Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world. This is he of whom I said : After me cometh a man who is preferred before me, for he was before me." In another tradition John seeks to evade the responsibility of baptizing the Messiah, but at the command of Jesus they descend into the water, and as Jesus arose He had a vision of an open Heaven and of a spirit in the form of a dove coming down upon Him, while a voice sounded within His soul, saying : " This is my beloved Son."

This scene must for ever remain incomprehensible. Not one of the four narratives that portray it gives us the slightest leading as to its real significance. Baptism, among the Jews and in other systems of organized religion, was a common rite of initiation into the mysteries of the faith. To John, in that agonizing hour of apprehension of approaching calamity, it seemed to be a symbol of the mystical washing away of sin. Neither of these meanings could apply to the baptism of the Son of God. The cryptic words : " Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness " do not help our understanding. What we do see, with startling clearness, is that from that moment the unknown artisan, from a remote province of the Roman Empire, became identified with the Messiah of God ; that the place of Jesus Christ in the story of mankind was fixed then as a divine revelation to man ; and that He so conceived of Himself and of His mission upon earth.

From that hour the influence of John began to

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wane. He had borne his immortal testimony and his work was done. But it is just at this point that our hearts go out to him most warmly. If he was great in the fulness of his power, he was glorious in its decline. Such a career as his was destined to be a prolonged tragedy. By a lifetime of self-sacrifice and struggle he won the gift of spiritual leadership, but only for a brief moment was he permitted to exercise it. Within that narrow span of time he fought most manfully for the Kingdom of God, and then he put aside the robe and sceptre of authority with a dignity and humility that show, as no word could have done, the completeness of his surrender to the divine will. There is no note of disappointment or envy in his voice when he publicly declared : " He must increase, but I must decrease."

Yet it is not a simple matter to reconstruct in our imagination the figure of this masterful man and make him live in history. Much of the rather slight outline of historical narrative, upon which so much of our faith rests, is local and racial in character. The Kingdom he foretold, the fear of which filled his soul with painful apprehension, was the delirious dream of Jewish mystics and patriots. How far John was a patriot we are not told, but it is clear that he shared the national belief in a divine intervention, preceded by a world-wide disaster. It was this approaching day of wrath, the day of final judgment, that aroused his energies. His contribution was that he transferred the load of sin from the shoulders of the nation to those of the individual. But he could offer to this burdened soul no support through priestly sacrifice and absolution. When his baffled and affrighted listeners appealed to him with the

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one insistent question : " What shall we do ? " he had only the command to repent and to practise the commonplace virtues of social life. After his heated harangues, his remedy for their distress leaves the impression of an anti-climax. A Pharisee or a Stoic could have said as much. He sounded no call to arms, lighted no fire of enthusiasm or devotion, awakened no spirit of adventure for God. His horizon was black with coming storm and he could but lift up his voice and cry. He could not create the new life, and it was life for which these afflicted people yearned. He bid them mend their ways and wash away their sins in the cleansing waters of baptism. And then his voice faltered. He could go no further. He could bring no new gladness into hearts he had aroused by the fervour of his spirit. It was a diviner voice that cried : " I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall not hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

The implacable fate that pursued this man is in the temper of Euripides. One last, stupendous trial awaited him and then a sordid death. The arch-fiend had still an instrument of torture in Herod Antipas, the lustful ruler of Galilee and Peræa. This evil man had aroused the wrath of John by a wanton outrage against the moral law. He had put away his lawful wife that he might join himself to his half-niece, Herodias, the wife of his own half-brother, Philip. John had violently condemned this incestuous union before the people, and for this act had been seized and cast into the gloomy fortress of Machærus, in the wild, desolate land east of the Jordan river. Death came to him there, swift and terrible ; but death was not the real tragedy

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of this last phase. That tragedy was the horror of inaction and helplessness, when the thrill of inspiration had passed and the fire of the soul damped down under the deadly calm of waiting and solitude. He who had feared no man, nor all the powers of evil, felt for a moment the cold clutch of doubt. Was he deceived? Was the witness of his own spiritual vision true? His message to Jesus is like a cry for help: "Art thou he who should come?" And Jesus, knowing the quality of the man, sent back no word of personal assurance but only the report that deeds of love and mercy proceeded forth from Him—for as in the Kingdom of God so also now "the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached unto them."

Thus there passed out of life, in full trust and confidence in the reality of the Kingdom of God, one of the giant figures of history. Jesus said of him that he was the greatest man born of woman; yet, apart from his Master, he would have ranked as a forgotten Jewish fanatic. He was set apart for a life of hardship, loneliness, and struggle. Not one of the common joys and satisfactions of the world was given to him. Even his short period of public activity was quickly overshadowed by the towering figure of Jesus Christ. His end was ignominious. And so, even before the Christian drama has really opened, we are confronted by a challenge to the accepted standards by which we measure success and failure in the world. If John won the goal—the goal of enduring satisfaction towards which we all are striving—that fact opens to the student's

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mind the whole question of the values of life ; for John was not great because of his self-assertion or self-seeking or self-achievement, but because through long and severe preparation his whole nature became illuminated with a light that is not of this world. He was at once contemplative and active, humble and fearless, masterful and docile ; because he sought not his own will but the will of Him who sent him. From this delicate harmony of all the parts of his nature with the source from which all his energies flowed he acquired not only his extraordinary insight and understanding of the world about him, but also a marvellous dominion over men's emotions and desires. His conscious life was snatched from him by a vulgar sensualist, but even Herod knew that such spirits as John's cannot be destroyed, and he rightly surmised that it had passed into the menacing figure of Jesus. We think in our schooldays of the immortal empire-builders—the Alexanders, Cæsars, and Napoleons of history—whose mighty works have passed away, and then we know that the surviving power in this civilization, and in every other, is the spirit which watches for and proclaims to its own generation the coming of the Son of God.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE TEMPTATION

THE excitement aroused by John's fervent preaching was a flickering flame, soon extinguished. The crowds dissipated and returned to the uneventful life of common day. No such catastrophe as John had predicted overtook them. The great revival is remembered in history only as a prelude to our Lord's ministry.

But to Jesus had come the great crisis of life : the heavenly sign and voice made clear His path of destiny. For the moment He was swept into a state of exaltation and ecstasy and, as in a dream, His steps carried Him into the remote recesses of the wilderness. There, the story tells us, He became unconscious of physical sensation and for forty days passed through profound spiritual experiences. Our knowledge of this event, and of the scenes that followed it, must have come indirectly from Jesus and have been communicated to the disciples in the form of a dramatic struggle between Himself and the Prince of Darkness. He must have told them of how He awakened from the long spiritual trance to find Himself, exhausted and defenceless, in the awful desolation of the Jordan valley. It was a terrible awakening to the realities of earthly life ; and these claims of body, mind, and soul upon Him were like

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the subtle insinuations of the immortal Tempter. It was an intensely human picture of an inevitable situation, showing how the Son of God must suffer the reactions of great emotional strain and must Himself experience the power of the primitive passions that work within our natures. Hunger and Vanity and Ambition are the energizing forces that direct the destinies of individuals and races. Jesus would have been nothing more than a stage figure if He had not shared the incentives and allurements common to all humanity.

As it stands, the story appeals to our imagination much as do the parables of Jesus or the early dramatic poem called the "Book of Job." The figures are of heroic size and speak a noble language, but they live in our thoughts because the subject of their debate comes within the circle of our own experiences. We feel that the two antagonists are acting out a conflict in which we too are engaged.

We can even follow the steps understandingly. The sudden call came to Jesus at the close of a long period of obscure and uneventful life; but such a call suggests a form of spiritual intoxication, or it may be like the mirage of a thirsting soul. The tragedy of this sort of self-delusion has been enacted over and over; and always it is at the moment of purest exaltation and physical weakness that the defences break down.

We do not know the Devil by that name, but every saint and every artist who has been lifted into the region of high emotion has met him at the gateway that leads back to normal life. Such as these know how Jesus felt when, after a long period of ecstasy, He at last found Himself once more in the world of



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sensation. It was a critical moment. He had seen visions that no words can picture, but the gnawing hunger and extreme weakness of His body suggested a delirious mind. How easy it would be to exercise His divine power to satisfy His desperate need. The Heavenly Father, who had sent manna to His wandering children, and who had fed the prophet by a raven, would surely succour His beloved Son in His extremity. This was the parable that symbolized the great choice. By that choice His trust in God flamed out victoriously. Henceforth He was detached from the world of anxiety and care. As far as we know, the workshop in Nazareth never again called Him. Out of His subconscious mind arose, for His comfort, the ancient words of His childhood's lesson: "Man does not live by bread alone."

We are following the order of events as given in St Matthew's gospel, which is not quite the same as those of St Luke and the Gospel of the Hebrews.

The next scene is very picturesque but is not so easily interpreted by experience. It was a challenge to the reality of faith in God's protecting power. The action of the poem shifts from the wilderness to the lofty pinnacles of the temple in Jerusalem. The Devil cunningly insinuates that his victim shall put to test a divine promise contained in the ninety-first psalm by leaping into the air and trusting that the angels would bear Him up lest He dash His foot against a stone—just as the wily Florentine ecclesiastics challenged Savonarola to a trial by fire. We are to think of Jesus in a half-conscious state, His soul burning with faith and trust, while in His mind, perhaps, were surging the

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wild and unmeasured words with which the Messianic idea had been clothed by extravagant patriots. Such a test would be a striking sign of the reality of the heavenly voice. That was the temptation—the temptation from which mankind is never free—to bargain with God for safety or for prosperity as the price of goodness. It is the theme of Job. “Yet have I never seen the righteous forsaken,” sings the psalmist. “Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand and one on thy left hand, in thy glory,” is the claim of ambition.

If that temptation came to Jesus in His hour of trial it was triumphantly met. No outward sign could confirm the reality of the inward experience through which He had passed with God. “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God ” was His sufficient answer.

The next scene takes us to the top of a high mountain ; and below Him stretched all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them. These were the fields, already white unto harvest, that He had been sent to reap. That was what the Messiahship meant ; all the prophets had so interpreted it. David’s Son was to sit upon the ancient throne and all the world was to do Him homage. He was to have glory and power and dominion from sea to sea. No humble rabbi, fresh from a carpenter’s bench, was He to be, but a Prince of the House of Judah. This indeed was a confirmation of the heavenly voice ; but it was the Devil, and not God, who uttered the words : “ All these things will I give unto thee if thou wilt fall down and worship me.”

At last this Evil One had risen to the high level of Jesus’ mind. He offered a perfect counterfeit

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of the golden sceptre Jesus was about to grasp. According to the Gospel of the Hebrews the scene is on the peak of Mount Tabor, near the village of His childhood days. Again He looked over the beautiful scene that made His whole world. He saw again the mountains, the villages, the lake, and the river of His beloved homeland. That was His Kingdom and over it God had ordained Him to rule. But the revelation that had called Him to this high mission had also committed Him to the way of God. The Devil would make Him the political Messiah of passionate Jewish hope. The elements of hatred, discord, and revolt would gather under His banner, as they did under the banner of David. He would incite the madness of greed, of selfishness, and pride in the name of patriotism. Once more the land of His fathers would be drenched with the blood of raging demons, who were made in the image of God. It was all clear now. His Kingdom was not of this world. Satan had scaled a high mountain to meet the Messiah in His exalted state; had offered Him the uttermost gift. But in that sublime moment the issue was definite and luminous. No good can arise out of surrender to evil. The ways of God and the Devil—of right and wrong—can never march together.

“Go.

Never again elude the choice of tints.  
White shall not neutralize the black, nor good  
Compensate bad in man; absolve him so :  
Life's business being just the terrible choice.”

And then Jesus awakes. The fitful dream is passed. Again the warm sun breaks over the wilderness and fills the tortured soul with warmth and glory.

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The battle has been fought and won. An infinite peace surges in His heart—like a visit of ministering angels.

It has not passed unnoticed that in this supreme crisis the struggle for spiritual freedom was waged quite apart from the vast religious establishment that was dedicated to the service of God. However we regard the story, it is a picture of high heroism. Nor can we doubt that this lonely Fighter would have welcomed the sympathy and support of those who looked for the coming of God's Kingdom upon earth. A genial conformity to the accepted standards of the faith in which He had been trained would have won for Jesus the approval of the influential and opened to Him a long and useful career. This was the allurements of the Devil. This word "career" appears often in the dictionary of youth, and it is not associated with hard fighting in the wilderness. To be safe, to be gratified, and to possess power are not mean ambitions and merge easily into our sacred sentiments and hopes.

But the "terrible choice" cannot be eluded. Sooner or later we are brought face to face with the drama of Christ's temptation.



## SECTION II





## CHAPTER VII

### SPRING-TIME IN GALILEE

BETWEEN the dramatic episode of the Temptation and the return of Jesus into Galilee lies a gap we seek in vain to bridge. Until the Baptist had been seized by Herod and cast into prison the two Heralds of the Kingdom of God seem to have remained together. To each it was the supreme crisis of life, and, when they appear again in the gospel narratives, the destiny of each is clear. To John the days of activity and influence were passed. The stage, upon which he had played so valiant a part before his little world, must now be filled by Him whose coming he had proclaimed.

It was in a fishing hamlet called Capernaum, on the north-west coast of the Galilean lake, that the ministry of the new Prophet began. We do not know with certainty the site of this unimportant place, which is endeared for ever to the hearts of Christian disciples, and was the centre of the small world in which Jesus moved. He had been drawn back to the land of His childhood by an instinct not unlike that of a peasant for his native soil. Among the simple people, with whom His life had been spent, His spirit found its freest play, and in that land of fields and lake and villages, He moved in a familiar world.

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In this fair country and to its hardy and vigorous inhabitants Jesus one day appeared. Already four of His friends had attached themselves to His mission, and the Christian Fellowship was begun. "Straightway on the Sabbath day He entered into the synagogue and taught"; thus Mark introduces us to the opening of the Galilean ministry. This simple statement is suggestive, for it fixes Jesus' place in the Jewish world. He planted Himself firmly in the racial soil of His own people and cherished the institutions of His fathers.

The synagogue was, at this time, a distinctive feature of Jewish civilization. It was the centre of village life—the schoolhouse, the place of worship, the popular assembly, and the court of justice. Every town and village had such a meeting-place, where, on the Sabbath, the whole community came to listen to the reading and explanation of the sacred writings.

Each synagogue was a little self-governing democracy. There was no official ministry, but, as in an open forum, the first volunteer was privileged to assume the leadership. Among a turbulent and jealous people, to whom the excitement of debate was a keen delight, such assemblies must often have been the scenes of violent wrangling and disorder. The field of public interest was exceptionally narrow and the weight of tyrannical orthodoxy oppressive, yet probably no other nation of that age had such an efficient instrument of popular education and of self-expression.

If our fancy should lead us to join the throng that crowded into the synagogues of Galilee, we shall witness a strange scene. A young Man is pressing

## Spring-time in Galilee

forward to receive the roll from the Keeper's hand. As He stands before us to read, strong in His youth and bearing the signs of wholesome manual toil, He is indeed an attractive figure. We have seen Him many times before as He moved through our village streets, laden with His tools ; but something we cannot understand has marvellously changed Him. He does not now appear like a provincial artisan, but like a Master whose wisdom and authority are unquestioned. We are disturbed by His dominating personality. He stands before the associates of a lifetime like one who has been commissioned and anointed for a regal task. The confidence and power of His royal state surround Him like a cloud. That is the grand impression this new Prophet makes upon us as we first listen to His message. We must compose our picture from more than one memory as we seek to narrate it.

He rises, and there is a wonderful light in His eyes, a joyous thrill in His voice, as He reads out of the scroll the beautiful words :—

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, Because He anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor : He hath sent Me to proclaim release to the captives : And recovery of sight to the blind : To set at liberty them that are bruised, To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”

A deep silence falls over the company as we listen to this familiar passage. He sits down to speak and His opening words challenge our attention : “To-day,” He says, “hath this scripture been fulfilled in your ears.” What does He mean ? Our minds are questioning and our hearts strangely agitated. A sense of crisis possesses us. His words

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burn within us and convict us of unworthiness. He is speaking of the Kingdom of God and bidding us prepare for the day of its appearing, just as John the Baptist did. But it is not the same message. He is not violent, but we wonder at the words of grace that proceed out of His mouth. It is not a message of fear and doom. He is firing our imaginations by a vision of a blessed state of opportunity and privilege. Yet there is not wanting a stern note. The day will come like a thief in the night and only those who are watching and waiting will be prepared for it. Watch therefore. Make ready for the bridegroom's coming. Repent and believe, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. This was the burden of His message, but how shall we tell of the strange power that went out from Him to us? His words are well within our understanding—simple and homely—and yet they search our most secret beings. The strain of excitement has become intolerable. Suddenly a cry of agony fills the room, piercing and heartrending. For a moment it chills the blood. But the explanation is quick at hand. The man thus wrought upon is possessed of an unclean spirit. The outburst of hysteria is not the result of disease, or passion, or nervous disorder, but of terror which seizes the spirit in the presence of its Master. "I know thee, who thou art, the Holy One of God," comes from the afflicted man's lips. And Jesus commands it: "Hold thy peace and come out of him." There follows a terrible scene. The unclean spirit, tearing at the man and crying with a loud voice, came out of him.

Then a great amazement takes hold upon us. Never before had any one of that company so much

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as dreamt that any power could free an unfortunate victim from the grip of this evil thing. But this Man, who left His carpenter's bench in Nazareth only a short time ago, has received some heavenly gift and "with authority he commandest even the evil spirits and they obey him." There is commotion all over the synagogue. Men are questioning one another as though they were uncertain of their own sense. "Is not this the carpenter's son?" each asks of his neighbour; "is not his mother called Mary and his brethren James and Joseph and Simon and Judas, and his sisters, are they not with us?"

It is not to be thought that we are wholly pleased with what we see and hear. Our hearts are captured, but there are other emotions that arise out of the most sacred memories of our race. From generation to generation our fathers have cherished the oft-repeated promise that the Kingdom of our God should fill the earth. A century and a half before, a great prophet had uttered words that the people have never forgotten:—

"And in the days of those Kings shall the God of Heaven set up a Kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall the sovereignty thereof be left to another people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these Kingdoms and it shall stand for ever."

That is the hope upon which our souls have fed, and what, we ask ourselves, can this humble enthusiast have to do with the setting up of Kingdoms? We are looking for heavenly cohorts, and at their head the glittering figure of the Divine Conqueror, not for a village Carpenter with His tender compassion for

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the afflicted. Yet, even while He speaks, our minds are haunted by an almost forgotten memory of a wounded and afflicted Christ, who, by His suffering and stripes, would bring redemption to God's chosen people. "He will be a staff to the righteous on which they will support themselves and not fall : and he will be the light of the Gentiles and the hope of those who are troubled in heart."

Then our minds run to and fro, while His words burn within us. We have joined the group now that follows Him from village to village. Everywhere we witness signs of His incomprehensible power in acts of mercy, and our souls are aflame as we listen to His message. Always His first appeal is to His own people and in the synagogue on the Sabbath day. He becomes more and more the Master of His world, dominating His hearers by an authority that admits no equal. He holds Himself above the schools, the government, and the religious leaders. His arrogant "But I say unto you" brushes aside the sacred precepts of the law and the prophets. Day and night He lives under heart-breaking strain, but he asks for no sympathy, nor does he seek human support. His detachment from and independence of the common interests of life leave us with a feeling of estrangement.

But the next moment all this is dissipated by the warmth and tenderness of His manner towards those who come to Him in need. There is an irresistible charm in His relations with simple people. He radiates love and is not offended by their dulness nor their folly. He does not see them in the mass, but each separate individual becomes the object of His anxious care. He is possessed with a passion

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to protect the helpless and ignorant and to save those who have gone astray. He has a deep, mystic reverence for children; they remind Him of His Father's home. So intent is He to bring joy and peace into broken lives that He seems unmindful of the social and moral distinctions men make among themselves. His condemnation is reserved for those who condemn others.

Now, we begin to notice that the important people—the people who set the standards and make the customs of the world—are taking fright. This new prophet is teaching a dangerous doctrine. All history has shown, they believe, that God is on the side of the strong, the wise, and the fortunate. Only such could keep alive the flame of patriotism and preserve the old forms of worship. This young Man talks like a revolutionist and forgets that wealth and happiness are God's gifts to those upon whom He chooses to bestow peculiar favour. The ancient wise men taught that suffering and misfortune are God's punishment for sin, but this strange Teacher implies that God feels an especial tenderness for those who most need tenderness. That is a levelling doctrine and dangerous to the faith. Without doubt they are dealing with a pretender and a blasphemer. And then He is deceiving people by His extravagant language about the power of belief. He talks wildly, as if a common man, such as a fisherman, could trust in God's bounty, could control the elements or bid a mountain cast itself into the sea. Whoever this Man is, He cannot be the Messiah.

We must have some sympathy with these important people. But listen to His speech. How



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gracious it is ; how full of charm and suggestion ; how it warms the heart with a great hope. This wonderful gift owes nothing to the schools, for He talks about the things we know and see. He seems to be telling us about the interests that engaged His mind all through those silent years when He lived in Nazareth. He could have been no ordinary artisan, for every common task was a mirror of the Kingdom of Heaven. He tells us His spiritual biography, introducing ordinary events by the words, "It is like." He recalls the children playing in the market-place ; the women crouching over the hand-mill which ground their corn ; the village wedding ; the calculating, foresighted builder ; the thrifty housewife ; the clever and dishonest steward ; the rapturous birds and flower-bespangled valley in the spring-time ; the shepherd and his flock upon the hillside ; the sower and his seed—all the common things over which His wit flashes, like a searchlight over the dark sea of life.

He speaks a picture language ; incomparable fables of heavenly things. It is all divine artistry—swift-moving, simple, and dramatic. There are no stiff definitions, no laboured philosophy, but the poetry of the soul. We have grown too familiar with these delightful stories and misuse them. We strain meanings out of them that are not there. Divine Poet that He was, He touched great themes lightly and at different points, picking out a facet of truth with a shaft of light.

This method of illuminating truth by the most familiar figures is the more noticeable in contrast to the fantastic allegory of the preaching in the synagogues, or the dry, formal precepts of the scribes.

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interpretations of the law. His knowledge of the sacred literature of the Jews was profound and critical, but not always accurate: the text was of slight importance compared to the spirit that infused it. The whole structure of His teaching was built upon the religious history of His own race. For Him, Rome, and the ancient civilizations of the East, did not exist, and Greece had never been. Nothing really mattered except that the Kingdom of God was nigh, and divine judgment was descending upon the earth. Before this awful truth all details of life rearranged themselves in a new order and value. Every living thing and every clod of earth became precious, and through the confusion and tragedy of life the steadfast soul passed triumphantly to God and blessedness.

Thus we see and hear Him by the lake shore, and in the little communities of Galilee. He is a Man of mystery and of loneliness. So far as we know, His life heretofore had been undistinguished, but this splendid blaze of power must have been the eruption of long-concealed fire.

If we would reach up to Him by steps of understanding in lower realms, we might reverently find a striking parallelism in the life of Abraham Lincoln, the son of another carpenter. We can grasp something of the mystery of the divine spirit as we seek to penetrate the mystery of a purely human nature. We can follow the story of poverty and obscurity, of long years of neglect, of careful, often painful training, for an unknown mission, and then, with the sudden call, the awakening of unsuspected powers. The early associates of Lincoln were amazed and mystified that one like themselves could be in any

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way unlike them. "Whence has this man wisdom? Is he not the carpenter's son?"

Such a life is just that little light which reveals diviner things—a far more illuminating light than the ecstasy of a Francis or the stern world-renunciation of a Loyola.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OPPOSITION

THOSE first days in Galilee are often spoken of as the joyful spring-time of Jesus' ministry. His fame had spread throughout the land. Great crowds followed Him as He moved from village to village and His works of mercy filled many stricken hearts with gratitude. He had gained public attention, but as yet His message had not received public understanding. His confidence was unbounded; His spirit serene and buoyant; authority rested upon Him like a regal robe. Nevertheless this brilliant picture is painted against a background of impending tragedy.

Among His hearers were now representatives of the ruling class who had come from Jerusalem to investigate the uprising among the people. Jesus had not claimed to be the Messiah; indeed He had sought to silence those whose grateful hearts had proclaimed that He could be nothing else than the Son of God. But the expectation of a supernatural Leader was so firmly planted in the national mind, and was so responsive to any extraordinary event, that suspicions were aroused as to His real nature. There had been previous uprisings as the result of the same hopes, and it was natural that the rulers and responsible men should seek to know the mean-

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ing of this new agitation. They were men learned in the law and the prophets. They had fixed ideas about the promised Kingdom over which a King would rule in the name of Jehovah. The Messiah would be no unheralded adventurer but a scion of David's royal line, into whose keeping would be put the sacred treasures of their faith. This was the passionate belief of the patriotic Jew, and it is not strange that every jot and tittle of the law was jealously guarded.

Moreover, there is no sign that Jesus' doctrine had found acceptance among the common people. They pressed about Him, hotly demanding the health and happiness He had power to give them. Some even thought He might lead them in rebellion against their Roman oppressors. But we seek in vain for any evidence of spiritual awakening or understanding of the Kingdom of God. They looked to their Messiah for liberty and national greatness and dominion over others. Jesus taught that the struggle between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world was within the individual soul, and that the satisfactions they craved came only from the surrender of the selfish will to the will of God. They said life was Possession: He said life was following Him. They said life was Mastery: He said life was Love.

It was not long before His unworldly doctrine came into sharp conflict with the practice of the Jews. The little town of Capernaum, being built upon the boundary, was a customs station. The officer whose duty it was to collect taxes held the most odious position in Jewish society. He was not only a servant to the masters of his race, but the

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Roman system of taxation compelled him to be an oppressor and a thief.

The Imperial treasury in Rome levied great sums upon the conquered races, and sold the contract of "farming" the taxes to the highest bidder. Through many greedy hands the contract passed until it reached the miserable creature whose business it was to extract the money from the people. These execrated and despised outcasts came under the stern law of orthodox Judaism, and even Jesus couples them with harlots and heathen. The law drew a line of separation between the clean and the unclean that ran through the whole life of the Jew. There were many rules about eating and drinking, about blessings and washings, about the use of napkins and purification of rooms. But most emphatic of all were the rules which protected the pure and noble patriot from contact with the unclean and the renegade. Now it chanced that one day Jesus, passing by the receipt of customs, saw the publican seated there and called to him, "Follow me." This man's name was Levi, and he is commonly identified with the Matthew whose name is given to the first gospel. Not only did Jesus add him to His little group of followers but He went into his house and ate with him. It was a mad act, an open defiance to a most revered social law. At this time Jesus was the object of public curiosity ; His words were weighted with authority ; and blessings everywhere attended His steps. But His message was not yet received and He had reached no position of influence. It was a critical moment in His career and He met it by arraying the most powerful class in the community against Him. He deliberately

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put a weapon into His enemies' hands. A protest arose at once against the pretended prophet who was so ignorant or so unworthy that "He receiveth sinners and eateth with them."

Jesus was quite unmoved. He explained that the whole need not a physician but the sick : that He came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. There was indeed, in the nature of things, an eternal separation between righteousness and sin—as between the wheat and the tares—but the harvest was not yet gathered. Until that great day let the wheat and the tares grow in the same field. He implied more than His words said. God was the husbandman, and by His judgment, not by any man's nor any law's, would the separation be made. This was His unpardonable offence. It was a practical denial of the established religious code and a challenge to the accepted teachers of the law.

Around the central idea of His place in God's plan—which was at once the seed of His own tragic harvesting and of man's eternal hope—He grouped the most touching and the most beautiful of all His parables. As we meet them in the narrative we can feel how the world of sense and prejudice has slipped away from Him. He strains to the uttermost against the cruel and hopeless judgments of men. His place was with the sinners who needed Him. His bread was for those who hungered for it, and His water of life for those who were athirst.

The idea possessed His mind and His imagination played around it in simple and vivid pictures. "What man of you," He cried, as His eyes swept the



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hillside, "having an hundred sheep, having lost one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness and go after that which is lost until he find it?" And again, recalling His own thrifful home, "What woman, having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she find it?" Then He draws even closer to the deepest human feeling and reaches His highest flight of spiritual imagery. In incomparable strokes He pictures a home, broken and disordered by the passionate selfishness of a younger son. He sketches the heartless and degraded career of the young dissolute, and traces his steps, down and down, to the companionship of swine. To the Jew this figure of the swine expressed the uttermost degradation. But suddenly He introduces the divinest symbol of God that ever brought hope and comfort to a repentant heart. With swift dashes He portrays the penitent and broken lad seeking again the home, whence he had set out, with a humble prayer to be numbered among his father's hired servants. The story reaches its superb climax in the scene where the father, "beholding him afar off," rushes out to meet him and welcomes him with overflowing love. The prodigal is met, not with the stern decrees of a just law, but with gratitude and joy, with music and feasting—"for this my son was dead, and is alive again, he was lost and is found."

After two thousand years the music of these charming tales does not fail to awaken an answering chord within our own souls. They engage our sentiments and our sympathy. But it is still doubtful if we, any more than those listening Jews, appre-

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hend the stupendous revolutionary doctrine of Jesus' teaching. If His portrait of God is true, it shows how tragically wrong the world and the judgments of the world are. The father is thinking of the boy and not of his sin ; is suffering pangs of paternal sorrow because of that sin. The thought of punishment does not enter ; even justice grows pale in that blinding flash of love. His joy is in the family circle made whole again.

But even these brilliant illustrations of His message were not likely to soften the rising antagonism of the rulers. He had scandalized them by attracting a publican into His little band of disciples : He had offended even the well-disposed by public contempt for the law which separated the faithful from the sinners, and He had outraged the learned by His tone of superior wisdom. He clearly was not the passive lamb of pious sentiment, but the most dangerous Innovator of His race.

He was now building about Himself a mass of misunderstanding and hatred that was to prove His earthly doom. His next offence was His outward indifference to the three important forms of discipline in the Jewish system of religion. Indeed, in every Eastern faith, Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving were recognized essentials of worship. The thousand channels of active service and fellowship, with which the Western world occupied itself, were not then open. Observance of the minute precepts of the law and the outward show of worship were the common signs of piety. John the Baptist had practised extreme abstinence, and his disciples still kept the Mondays and Thursdays of each week as appointed days of fast. It raised questions when this preacher

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of the Kingdom of Heaven ignored the common practices of religious life.

Jesus was asked to explain, and in His answer the familiar figure of the wedding festival occurs again. Hinting at, but not revealing, His Messianic secret, He likened Himself to the bridegroom, whose presence called forth joy and merry-making. Then, as if seeing the future, He adds: "But the day will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them and then will they fast in that day." He was not, however, content to leave the subject with that mystifying remark. He must renew His challenge and assert His supremacy. Recalling the habits in His boyhood's home, He adds, "No man seweth a piece of undressed cloth on an old garment; and no man putteth new wine into old bottles."

It was a homely illustration, but His enemies could not mistake its meaning. He appeared to them a blasphemer. He had come to destroy and supplant the ancient faith. The new revelation He brought from God was of too strong a texture to be grafted on to the fraying system of the Jews: too full of ferment to be contained in the rotting formalities of their worship. He was offended by the ostentatious signs of piety that everywhere afflicted His eye. Upon the corners of crowded streets He stumbled over shameless worshippers; His ear was dinned with the noisy trumpets announcing a distribution of alms. His sense of decency was shocked by the painted and disfigured faces of men who were proclaiming their piety by fasting. He riddled these sham saints with sarcasm. He said they were looking for the praise of men and they had their reward. They were flattered and applauded

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by onlookers, but their petty, vulgar souls were shrivelled up. "But ye," He added, "take heed that ye do not your righteousness before men to be seen of them."

At another time, Jesus stood in the Temple court and pointed out two men,—one, a Pharisee, had come there to glorify himself in that sacred place, because he had kept to the last letter the requirements of the law. He had missed nothing and the skirts of his garment were clean from contamination. He had reached a high degree of aloofness from the soil of life; he was virtue's fine flower, an aristocrat in the Temple of the nation's God—and therefore justified before all men. The other was a publican, a debased and polluted outlaw, who drew apart from the company, and alone, deserted by all, afar off, beat upon his breast in an agony of penitence and humiliation, crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." One would like to have seen the fire in Jesus' eye as His words flashed out, "I tell you, that man went down to his house justified rather than the other."

The accumulation of offences against Jesus grew steadily, through His own making; but the most unpardonable of all was a defiant and almost contemptuous attitude towards the law of Sabbath observance. At this point Jesus touched the very heart of the ancient law, and it is impossible not to feel some sympathy for those men who, all their lives through, had been trained to look upon that law as a divine ordinance. They saw a very remarkable and attractive young workman, whose kindling words and deeds of mercy had touched their hearts, but who carried no credentials and had had no

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training in the schools, assuming a wisdom and authority superior to their age-long traditions ; for the tradition that Jehovah rested from His labours on the seventh day probably far antedates any written document. As far back as events began to be recorded, the Sabbath day had been a jealously guarded institution. "Ye shall keep the Sabbath, therefore ; for it is holy unto you ; every one that profaneth it shall be surely put to death ; for whosoever doeth any work therein, that soul shall be cut off from among his people" (Exodus xxxi. 14). On that day no wood shall be gathered, no household work done, no ploughing nor reaping. A Sabbath-day journey is strictly limited, and no burden may be carried through the streets—even a needle stuck into a tailor's coat was an offence. With the passing years restriction was added to restriction until the law became an intolerable burden. The horror of that day cannot be forgotten, and it was inevitable that Jesus should more than once come into conflict with the strict upholders of the law. It seems to have first arisen from a trifling incident. Jesus, with some of the disciples, was passing through some cornfields one Sabbath morning in June—perhaps on their way to the synagogue—when the disciples plucked and ate a few ears of corn. This simple act was accounted as work, and in earlier times would have been punished by death. For this laxity the Jews reprov'd Jesus. Jesus' loose and inaccurate reference to David, in His reply, brought no healing balm but added to the confusion and irritation of the upholders of the law. But it closed with this admirable generalization "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

*Sabbath*

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It was possibly on that same day that the little company went into the synagogue and there found a man with a withered hand. There are several similar stories, or variations of the same story, and all point to the issue that was growing in bitterness between Jesus and the Pharisees. His enemies were gathered and were watching Him. His words came sharp and quick, "Stand forth," He said to the man, and, turning to His accusers, He flung His challenge: "Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or harm? to save a life or to kill?" On another occasion He compared the afflicted children of God with the dumb brutes. "Doth not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall and lead him away to watering? Is an act of mercy done to a woman who, for eighteen years, had been bowed down with infirmity, a less essential work for the Sabbath, less justifiable in God's eyes?"

Upon this vital question strong feelings were aroused. The people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by Him. His power was like that of God, and how could that be sin? But the Pharisees saw in this breaking of the law a sign of the Evil One, who sought to overthrow their sacred heritage. Jesus had no answer but a challenge.

The sword was drawn; no longer could there be peace. Jesus had outraged the deepest feelings of those who had been set apart to preserve and nourish what they believed to be the command of Jehovah. This disturber of the people could be no other than Beelzebub, the prince of devils.

Nor are these patriots to be lightly condemned. They, and their fathers, for generations, had been



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taught that Jehovah had reserved some glorious destiny for those who obeyed the law. And the law, they believed, had been miraculously revealed. It grew under their hands and their delight was in it; upon it they meditated day and night. This was their prosperity. Great memories of the past clung to it. All that was best in Jewish life was involved in it.

Nothing can better show that Christianity was much more than a fulfilment of the Jewish faith. It was a new way of life, and before it could be established as the divine way of life the old hard and bitter way must be destroyed. The Pharisee was right in realizing that revolution was astir and that when once the authority of even one precept of the law was questioned the end was near at hand. He was fighting for preservation of the faith and for the order of society.

Why then did Jesus use His growing influence with the people to disorganize and destroy the settled community life in those peaceful villages? Why did He, with bitter denunciations, arouse the resentment and hatred of those defenders of the law?

He was no demagogue, but it is clear that His mission completely possessed Him now. He shot straight at the mark. With clear foresight He saw the passing of the ancient régime to which the Jew had clung so tenaciously and upon which his hope of salvation was built. It was a moment of tragic disillusionment in Jewish history. Whoever Jesus was, He was certainly not the Messiah upon whose coming the hearts of many generations of believers had been fixed. Yet that was the tragedy. Jesus was the Messiah, and His real springing was not from



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*His Task*  
David's royal line, but from the body of the common people. It was His task to transfer the Messianic hope and faith from the illusion of the earthly glory and power of one race to the spiritual reality of the universal Kingdom of God. The two objects of faith could not abide together. Jesus said He came not to destroy but to fulfil; yet He did destroy, and it was only by the destruction of the Jewish system that He became the Saviour of mankind. The Sabbath law was the heart of that system. It was the living evidence of the separation of the Jew from all other peoples; the mark of exclusiveness throughout the world.

In these painful scenes we see Jesus in His most heroic mood. To Him, not less than to the scribes, the real law of God was a sacred inheritance and the absolute rule of life. Yet it was His tragic mission to denounce the false understanding and stubborn pride that the accumulated observance of the law had engendered. He had come from God to proclaim the free religion of the heart, and He found the heart imprisoned within dungeons of outward forms and customs. It was His sorry task to break down and utterly destroy those dungeons and set the heart free to love and adore its Master.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE WIDENING MISSION

THE place of Jesus in His own small world is now clearly defined. The movement of the story quickens, the situations grow more dramatic and intense, but there are no new elements introduced into the Galilean ministry. We are to picture Jesus moving about from village to village, everywhere proclaiming his startling message, and everywhere drawn away from His main mission by the irresistible compassion of His heart for human sufferers. He seems never to have been alone, unless in the still hours of dawn, and never free from the importunities of the crowd of eager seekers after health. St Mark has caught the atmosphere of those days. Incidents follow swiftly one upon the other, leaving little room for the divine teachings. Jesus appears almost like the victim of His own powers, as the throngs push and jostle Him in their passion for unfettered life. There are not many signs of earnest attention to His words, nor of gratitude and devotion for His mighty deeds. He has indeed a following of enthusiastic adherents, especially of women, and already the twelve of the inner circle are beginning to share His secret thoughts. The impression left upon the reader, however, is that of His intense loneliness. On the other hand there is a growing

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opposition that daily becomes more determined and embittered, and which arouses His stern and sometimes violent denunciation. This was an unequal contest and Jesus clearly foresaw the approaching crisis. He was in danger, and fearful lest the great day of the Lord should come before the warning had been carried to all the chosen people.

This situation introduces a new element into the narrative. To enlarge His ministry and to spread the gospel of the Kingdom throughout the land, Jesus determined to send forth the twelve upon their first mission. It was an anxious moment, and the long account in Matthew shows the agitation of Jesus' mind. He gathered the twelve about Him and gave them careful directions for every detail of the journey. They were to go out two by two, and their mission was to preach and heal and cleanse and to cast out devils. They were to take no money, nor be burdened with a change of clothing, but were to turn their steps towards the house of welcome and there abide. They must be knowing and cautious like the serpents, and innocent like the doves—for they were as sheep among wolves. Wherever they went they were to cry, "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." Thus the Christian Church entered upon its long career. Henceforth and for all time the message of the Son of God was committed to His disciples.

We are not permitted to follow the apostles upon this memorable mission, for just at this point occurs one of the many lapses in the New Testament narratives which perplex our minds. No hint is given of the extent or duration of their travels. The little band simply disappears from our view for a space,

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and the last days of John the Baptist are brought into the story.

We, however, cannot dismiss the incident from our minds. It plays far too large a part in our understanding of the Christian drama. When these ambassadors of Christ next appear in the narrative they are gathered about their Master, flushed with success and amazed at their own prowess. They had preached, had healed the sick, and even the devils had been subject unto them. To Jesus also it was a moment of great joy. The returning disciples had found Him so absorbed in works of mercy that He could not so much as eat bread. But now He turned His back upon the crowd, and with a peculiar wistfulness said: "Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place and rest awhile." We can imagine the eager questioning and the outpouring of the story of all the wonderful happenings that filled the next few hours.

We know all too little of that touching reunion, but it is clear that a new relationship was then established between the Master and the disciples. They had become friends and co-workers—partners in a glorious enterprise. To Jesus it was a visible sign of His triumph. "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from Heaven," He exclaimed, as His memory recalled the old myth of the genius of evil climbing the mountain of the gods and being hurled backward. Then He warns the glowing disciples against pride in their newly bestowed gifts and bids them rather to rejoice that their names are written in Heaven. Nevertheless He adds: "Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see."

This was one of the high moments of joy and

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confidence in the gospel narrative, but it raises questions in the reader's mind for which no answers are given. That silent space between the departure and return of the twelve had marvellously changed their natures. Their simple-hearted devotion to their Master no longer explains them. They had become possessed of powers like unto His own. They had set forth to proclaim the Kingdom of God, but what could that phrase have meant to them? We have seen that Jesus used the term somewhat loosely, as though it presented different aspects to His different moods, but always there is implied a new revelation of the impact of God upon the physical world. He never speaks of an impending political catastrophe such as that which aroused Isaiah 700 years before, or Savonarola 1500 years later, or which fills our minds with apprehension to-day. John the Baptist was shaken with fear of the terrible judgment of a righteous God upon the selfishness and cruelty of the human heart. Like Paul and Bunyan and thousands of others, he trembled before his own vision of righteousness; justice, truth, and holiness were menacing judges. Ruskin tells us that against the brilliant glow of Turner's light a sheet of paper loses its whiteness. So John thought of the purity of God. To such eyes the brightness of the world looks drab and the sinfulness of man is a black cloud.

But John cried aloud in the darkness which precedes the dawn. Jesus brought light and joyousness into the idea of a Heavenly Kingdom. The Judgment Day of His vision was no less stern and inevitable, but He uncovered untold resources of divine love and power. He introduced the element of

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faith, which appropriates these spiritual resources and through them wins mastery over the hindering impulses of the heart. The natural man must die like all created things: the spiritual man lives in the life of God. The end of all our efforts and hopes is not annihilation but a new birth into eternal joy and progress.

Did these followers of Jesus proclaim such a message as that to their Jewish hearers? If they had done so, they would have spoken to heedless ears. As yet they understood little, but they were vaguely conscious that some tremendous crisis was at hand, as the dumb animals are conscious of an approaching storm. If they thought at all, it was doubtless in the terms of some supernatural visitation of which their Master was the Herald. But it was not that understanding that made the glory of the mission. It was the power of Christ's personality working on and through them as they spoke His words and felt the healing forces of His presence in their acts of mercy. With the records of two thousand years before us we must believe that, then and always, intimate companionship with Christ does wonderfully enlarge our common human natures and endow them with a spirit that is not their own.

### THE TWELVE

At this point we might look a little more closely at the group of undistinguished men who were now relating to their Master the extraordinary experiences through which they had but just passed.

We have seen that the dispute with the Pharisees had reached the breaking point. St Mark makes

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this simple statement: "And the Pharisees went out and straightway with the Herodians took counsel against Him how they might destroy Him." It was thenceforward war unto death. It was this situation that introduced the new element into the preaching of the Kingdom. Jesus withdrew into the mountain region, followed by a great company of both Jews and Gentiles. Then taking with Him "whom he would" He sought a solitary place, and from the group of disciples chose twelve who were to be His nearest associates and co-workers. This act marks the close of the first happy period of the Galilean ministry. It was a moment of great danger. His fame was widespread, but His enemies were powerful and determined. Even His acts of pity and compassion were a source of peril, for grateful hearts had proclaimed Him the Messiah, and at any moment He might be seized and brought under the cruel rigours of the Roman law. It must have been clear to Him that His original purpose of reaching all the chosen people could not be carried out alone and that He must instruct others to preach and act in His name. Whatever may have been in His mind, on that day He laid the foundation stones of the Christian Church. There is no suggestion that He foresaw the course of events and was preparing for the future of the vast and highly organized institution that bears His name. But the later Church—after the hope of an immediate second coming had faded away—beheld in this chosen band the supporting pillars of the earthly temple He had reared.

The list of the apostles is the same in all four gospels and in the Acts, with one exception. Luke, in both his accounts, names Judas, the son of James,



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in the place of Thaddeus. There were twelve at the beginning, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel and to the twelve disciples of John the Baptist. Simon Peter stands at the head of every list and Judas Iscariot at the end, other more prominent names are the brothers James and John, Philip, and Andrew the brother of Peter. Of the rest, Thomas, Matthew, and Bartholomew appear for a moment in the light of history and then fade away into legendary shadow. These names fill the world. Their memories are revered and recalled in yearly festivals by every branch of the Catholic Church. Yet it is astonishing how little we really know of their later careers. In history they are but shadowy figures; in Christian sentiments they are numbered among the heroes of mankind. We would like to know what manner of men they really were. We do know something of the restricted world in which they lived, of their coarse manual toil, of the severe and narrow system in which they were trained. We have glimpses, too, into the minds of some; but, with the exception of a few, we are carried but a little way on the road of knowledge.

Among the twelve, Peter was the natural and undisputed leader. His impetuous, uncalculating spirit made him both the "rock" and the tempter of his Master. His blundering ardour, his loud protestations, his quick insight, and his unthinking onrush of emotions must have made him at once a trial and a joy to Jesus. He became a hardy adventurer of the faith. Legend carries him to Antioch, Greece, and Italy. It is almost certain he was in Rome, where from generation to generation his successors have been imperial bishops whose

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empire was over all the faithful, and at whose feet the kings of the earth laid their tribute.

This is the supreme irony of all time. Satire has played no madder, wilder prank than when it clothed this honest simple-minded labourer in kingly robes and crowned him with the triple crown. Boniface VIII, with his "Ego, Ego, Imperator sum," or Alexander VI, with his harem and his whirling debaucheries, wore the signet ring that linked them to the Galilean fisherman. It is sublime travesty ; the mockery of history's "Comic muse."

Nor has John, the "Son of Thunder," fared much better from tradition's ironical mood. It has drawn a portrait of a smooth and beautiful youth reclining on Jesus' bosom, and has left him there. But his long, venturesome life was spent amid hardships and dangers. It was not what he looked forward to when, in early days, his soaring ambition grasped at a throne in the new Kingdom ; nor was he wholly unmindful of Peter's pre-eminence. He must have been a virile and masterful leader among his fellows, and if he wrote, or inspired, the fourth gospel he was a man of the most distinguished gifts. By what stroke of genius did he link together the metaphysical idea of the eternal Word, or Wisdom—inseparable from the Father,—with the historical person of Jesus Christ ? Our imagination cannot bridge the distance between the young disciple of Jesus, in Galilee, and the inspired philosopher and poet whose vision transcends time and space.

Before this first group passes out, and the figure of Paul looms large in the centre of the stage, we have a fascinating picture of the very earliest days of the Church. Sorrow had given place to joy and the

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disciples were lured to Jerusalem by one love and one hope. It was their most thrilling moment. Christ had poured His spirit into them. He had inflamed their hearts with His own divine fire. The heavens had showered gifts upon them. The beloved Master had promised to be with them and to return to them. He was just beyond the skies and they watched for the first sign of the flashing armour and the first sound of the clanging trumpets of the heavenly host. With prayers and hymns they waited. It only mattered that they should be ready at His coming, be it at midnight, at cock-crowing, or in the morning. And while they waited they could be like Him. The Kingdom of God had come and they must shout it aloud to all people and in all tongues. The lame and halt and blind were still among them and they must bless and heal as He had done.

We cannot interpret all that singular story to our modern understandings, but we know something of the dynamic force of a great emotion that has captured the heart. It is no strange thing for men to become like unto gods in the abandonment of self, and all that selfhood counts of worth, to the cause of truth or justice or liberty. In the same way the love of Christ did in the year 40 A.D. and does still nineteen hundred years afterwards, marvellously endow the disciple with unsuspected powers. We do positively know that those who have really caught the spirit of Jesus grow like Him in purpose and desire. They have shown courage to face and defy all the powers of evil the world can muster; they have toiled and endured and suffered to bring blessedness to others, and they have died with songs of victory on their lips. These are historical

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facts writ large for our learning. These are our sacred inheritance. These are our guides and inspirations as we stand at the gateway of life.

## THE GREATER MIRACLE

We are not permitted to dwell long upon this refreshing scene of the Master and His beloved associates. But it is an incident peculiarly dear to the modern mind because the occasions when Jesus received support and comfort from any human source are rarely recorded. We are, however, quickly carried into a less familiar mental world.

The crowd that had followed along the shore had now reached the place of Jesus' retirement with the apostles. Looking out from His hiding place, Jesus saw a vast number of unfortunate people—reckoned at four or five thousand by the different evangelists. The hour of rest and happy communion was over and He came forth with words of welcome, for, it was reported, "He had compassion on them because they were as sheep not having a shepherd." He began to teach them many things, and "He healed their sick." Thus absorbed the day drew to a close in the wilderness. It was an embarrassing situation. The Lord would not listen to the suggestion that the people should be sent away to find food, but made them sit down, and having blessed the little store of bread and fishes began to distribute it among the company, when, lo! it multiplied in His hands and all that great throng were filled. It is small wonder that after witnessing this astounding feat the contented people should exclaim: "This is indeed that prophet who should come into the world."

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But the day of marvels was not yet ended. The wondering and satisfied people were sent away, and the disciples bidden to row across the lake, while Jesus went alone into the mountain to pray. During the night a tempest arose and those in the fragile boat were in great distress. Then they saw a shadowy form, that was like Him, walking towards them upon the sea. He was moving past, and they cried to Him in terror. Then He spoke and said: "Be of good cheer: it is I; be not afraid." With that He joined them, and the wind ceased.

This story is reminiscent of another stormy night upon that treacherous lake. Jesus was then with the disciples in the boat but sunk in the deep slumber of utter weariness. Again the disciples were thrown into a panic of terror and cried out to Him: "Save, Lord, or we perish." "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" He answered, but He "rebuked the winds and the sea and there was a great calm."

Such incidents as these throw a bright light upon the mental state of the second generation of believers. The stories must, by all the rules of literary criticism, be read as they stand. Although the minds of the disciples were "hardened" then, and their memories always amazingly defective, they later saw in these marvels the necessary proofs of the Lord's divine nature. He was the Messiah because He did the impossible. Their belief was bulwarked by a series of mental shocks which confounded all their limited knowledge of natural law. Nevertheless, the clear testimony of the gospels is that these succeeding marvels did not permanently impress the disciples nor reveal the secret of Christ's Messiahship. They are pictured as a peculiarly timid group of men whose

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fears were not banished by the many evidences of supernatural power. The evangelists, writing a generation later, offer the naïve explanation that the disciples "eyes were holden" or their "understanding darkened." That is indeed evident, but Jesus found them "slow of heart," "faithless and unbelieving."

We shall never know what really happened so to excite the imagination of each of Christ's biographers, but there must have been startling manifestations of His love and power. It has been suggested that the feeding of the thousands was one of the beautiful sacramental meals which prefigured the last Supper ; that the appearance of the Lord upon the angry sea was an allegory of the peace that fell upon the troubled spirits of the disciples when the vision of Christ appeared to their souls, and that the rebuke of the winds coincided with the calm of sheltered water as the boat rounded a promontory. All such explanations do violence to the text and would have filled the minds of the evangelists with astonishment. It is not for us to try to reflect the Jewish-Christian minds of the first century or to close our own to the glories that have been revealed to us. Greater things than these have we seen, and the book of Revelations is ever open.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

WE listened to John the Baptist's impassioned call to repentance, "for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand," with some agitation and fear. We would have sought a way of escape from the impending catastrophe, but when we looked to John for guidance, his only suggestion was to practise those virtues that are everywhere followed by wise and upright men. The answer to the question, "What shall we do?" was to be given somewhat later by Jesus of Nazareth, but given in the atmosphere of a more hopeful dispensation.

It was on, or at the foot of, a mountain, near the northern end of the Sea of Galilee, that Jesus one day gathered His disciples about Him and, before a great multitude, explained to them the mysteries of the coming Kingdom. Neither Mark nor John gives any record of this memorable event, and Matthew alone presents it in its true spirit and value. It is likely that Matthew had sources of knowledge unknown to Luke, and that he followed his usual plan of accumulating in one body many of the sayings that we find scattered throughout the other narratives; Matthew's account, therefore, has the weight and impressiveness of a carefully arranged volume



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of teaching, which, after the Hebrew manner of his writing, is grouped into divisions according to the sacred number, seven.

The arrangement of Luke opens with four Beatitudes which are balanced by four terrible sentences of denunciation that do not appear in Matthew. It is hard to believe that in the free air of that Galilean mountain-side Jesus uttered these awful judgments ;—

“Woe unto you that are rich ! for ye have received your consolation.

Woe unto you that are full now ! for ye shall hunger.

Woe unto you that laugh now ! for ye shall mourn and weep.

Woe unto you when all men shall speak well of you ! for in the same manner did their fathers to the false prophets.”

The harsh and challenging tone of these bitter words grates upon the ear that is attuned to the beautiful sentence, “Blessed are the poor in spirit ; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” They are certainly out of their place in the narrative, and belong rather to those dark and tragic days when the Saviour was surrounded by His foes in the temple court.

We turn to the Sermon on the Mount to seek for the plan of life upon which Jesus put the seal of blessedness. It is there that we shall find the motive power of the spiritual unrest that turned the hearts of His disciples away from earthly things and filled them with longing for the satisfactions of heaven. If they have not revolutionized the

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standards of the world, they at least have lured the affections of believers towards the higher achievements of the spirit.

We read this plan of life to-day with clear recognition of the changed conditions under which we live. Jesus spoke to a little company of Jewish provincials who knew almost nothing of the past history of the greater nations, and who had but slight understanding of the fateful events that were happening in their own time.

The problems of a crowded and highly organized social state such as ours, do not come within the Speaker's horizon. His mind is possessed by the idea of the Kingdom of Heaven and man's relation to it. He is not the champion of any race or nation or class, for these are imperfect reflections which shall pass away when that which is perfect is come. By seeking first the Kingdom of righteousness, prosperity, peace, and contentment shall be added unto it. He does not define this Kingdom, nor localize it in time or space. Sometimes it appears in His sayings as an inward possession; sometimes as an overwhelming political event; and sometimes as a blessed habitation beyond the skies.

So intense was the preoccupation of His mind with this idea, that the attainment of righteousness was to Him the only worthy aim of human struggle and every hindrance to it a mortal foe. He uses extreme language: "If thy right hand offend thee, cut it off. If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out. It is more profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not thy whole body be cast into

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hell. Agree with thine adversary quickly, for the time of probation is short. Conquer selfish desire, and fear sin more than social censure. Endure insult patiently. Love not only those who love you, as even sinners and outcasts do, but love those who spitefully use you and persecute you. Give to him that asketh. Let the beggar have both thy cloak and thy coat. Judge not others, but be clear-eyed to your own faults. Strain not at some little gnat of conventionality and then swallow a great, sprawling camel of pride. Be not ostentatiously pious, but secretly approach God behind the closed door of thy closet. Trust utterly in the love and care of the Heavenly Father, for He feeds and clothes even the birds and the flowers. Strive after the rhythm and harmony of the perfect life. Build thy house of life upon the steadfast rock of eternal truth, not upon the shifting sands of passing illusions."

This is magnificent, but it is not the world we know. It is a voice from Arcadia, and raises up a picture of those simple communities that are untroubled by poverty and greed and war. Such words belong to the open country, and in them we breathe the atmosphere of the hills and plains of Galilee. There, amidst the works of God, Jesus' soul was attuned to the infinite purpose of all creation. In that little garden-plot by the lakeside, where nearly all His life was spent, He saw the whole world and read the whole history of man. He saw the whole human tragedy in those about Him who were performing spiritual exercises, for the rewards of men, or who

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were upholders of institutions of worship for the sake of gain or power. For all such He felt unmeasured scorn. They were pitiable slaves, masquerading as free men. They were victims of their own delusions and subject to the whims of circumstance. For Himself, His soul exulted in freedom. No fear could reach Him, no power could bind Him, no adversary block His path. The page we are reading in Matthew's gospel is luminous with the light of Christ's trust and confidence. There are no perplexities there, no dark problems of misery and sin, no insoluble enigmas in those radiant words. He has led us, through the morass of human difficulties, straight to the heart of things and there we find enthroned the creative power of Love.

Jesus, in these sayings, has really raised the eternal question of the true satisfaction—the *summum bonum*—of human life. He is offering to our mind the divine interpretation of history, for that is what the doctrine of the loving, paternal God must mean. He takes the long view and reads purpose and order into the fitful and tumultuous progress of mankind. Buddha sought to smother all desire. Jesus awakened desire. He justified man's uncertain instinct for self-sacrifice and goodwill by revealing the end towards which he is journeying. There is a real City of God, where the natural law of being is to help and support and save one another; where all energy is absorbed in the upbuilding of life; where universal joy reigns over every victory of the soul, and sorrow over every defeat. There is no strife there, for all are of one

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heart and one mind ; no greed, nor want, nor bitterness, for the joy of satisfied desire fills every heart.

All this might seem like the saintly dream of a poet, enamoured of God, were it not that the light of that many-coloured dome breaks through and bespangles this earthly life. Even now some men are like that, or each man is partly like that. (It is the commonest truism to-day that the life best worth living is the life that contributes most to the welfare of mankind.) At a mighty cost our generation has repudiated such teachings as this : "The natural law, to which all laws of nature can be reduced, is the law of struggle : for the State it is a persistent struggle for possession, power, and sovereignty." Jesus did no violence to human reason when He spoke of a divine law of salvation and called it Love.

Between Treitschke and Jesus there can be no compromise. The one taught the law of the jungle, the other the law of grace. The one saw only the beginning of humanity's long journey, the other its high goal. Jesus is the Teacher of infinite hope. He knows nothing of the finality of sin or failure. He points ever towards a better future. And what fills the mind with breathless wonder is that He descended into Hell—into the Hell of utter despair we make of life—and there found a precious thing. He tells us that it was a pearl of great price, for the possession of which a man would sell all that he has.

This was a startling parallelism to put before a people who would not so much as utter the sacred name, and the doctrine it taught was even more repelling. It was a direct challenge to their inherited

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belief. God could not be likened to an anxious housewife, nor could He seek to save the victims of His just wrath. Misfortune was Jehovah's way of inflicting punishment for sin, even unto the third and fourth generation, and His will must not be thwarted. But Jesus showered His blessings upon the afflicted and unhappy as if there were no avenging law. His impious teaching even portrayed God as searching out those already condemned, and rejoicing when He had found them. There is a weak sense of justice in such doctrines. It implies that God can forgive and restore every penitent sinner, and that His Kingdom is for all who truly seek it.

If the doctrine of Jesus was a challenge to the accepted ideas of His generation, it is no less a challenge to our own. It is true that mankind has travelled far since the halcyon days when Jesus walked and taught in Galilee. He seems not to belong to our world, with its consuming anxieties and cares ; its bitter extremes of wealth and want ; its uncertainties and fears and suspicions, and its grave responsibilities for future generations. He knows nothing of the immutable laws that govern our lives in a great society, or of the manifold interests that bind us to this earth. He gave no thought for the morrow. He had been a working carpenter—possibly the chief support of a large family—but the virtues He extols are not those of labour, thrift, or domesticity. Family ties held Him loosely. Deep and tender as was His love for children, they do not suggest to His mind the future men and women

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who must be trained for life in this world, but the angels who behold the face of His Father in Heaven. To His own people He must have seemed like a none-too-friendly visitor in a foreign land, whose heart yearned for His home and who could not absorb Himself in the affairs about Him.

This is all admirable, but it hardly interests us as a practical experiment of social life. It is like the wisdom of a wise man, who, nearing the point of death, has turned from the earth and fixed his thought on Heaven. In the illumination of that moment the riches of the spirit alone bring contentment to the soul, and the aims for which men strive seem unreal and of little worth.

That may fittingly be the last, lingering look along the road over which the traveller has passed, but it is not the mental attitude of any wholesome youth who is examining the claims of Christ upon the present-day world. He will detect the false note which rings in any slavish following of the form, when the spirit calls urgently for a truer discipleship. The Westerner is a poor counterfeit when he tries to pass as an Eastern mystic. Poverty is not a "sweet sister," but a grim, stark tragedy in our crowded, unequal society. Heaven is no compensation to those whose minds and souls have been brutalized by the greed and selfishness of man. It is inconceivable that Jesus should make so inane a statement as "take no thought of the morrow" in the face of the duties and responsibilities we owe to the young. We cannot believe that He, "who was ever a fighter," would bid us to sit meekly



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by while wrong triumphed and flourished over the earth.

(But it is just such puerile sentimentalities that make our heroic faith a byword and a hissing to many a conscientious soul. We translate the words into our Western tongues, miss the fire and inspiration of the Speaker, and ignore the grand purpose of His mission.) It wrings the heart to recall His sublime figure—so masterful, so unconquerable, alone—while selfishness and malice and hatred closed in about Him; and still so patiently enduring, so steadfast, so compassionate towards the needy. That is the road over which He bids us follow Him in His steps, and some at least of the early disciples did follow Him, even to the cross-crowned hill.

The spectacle of our confused and helpless world to-day—entangled like a monstrous Laocoon in its own strangling passions—ought to make the dullest realize that the way of Christ is the only way of the world's salvation. We seek peace, freedom, justice among men and nations; kindness and goodwill in human intercourse; confidence and assurance in political and industrial affairs; sweetness and helpfulness from man to man.

How can such blessed gifts be won through struggle for possession, power, or dominion? We see the great contradiction clearly to-day and still we hesitate. We are obsessed by fear. We dare not put our trust in righteous dealing, nor give ourselves over to the law of God. We have vision and desire, but not the heroism of faith. The old way of outwitting or outrunning our neighbour still allures us, but in our fearful

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souls the voice of Jesus will not be stilled : " Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

The issue before the nations of the world is clear : it is Christ or Chaos.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE UNIVERSAL PRAYER

ONE day the disciples came to Jesus with the strange request that He would teach them to pray, as John the Baptist had taught his disciples. The strangeness of the request was that all their days they had been familiar with the fixed hours and forms of prayer in the Jewish ritual ; for a hundred and fifty years it is believed that the prayer of eighteen petitions had been repeated three times a day by the faithful. But they had watched their Master gathering calm and strength from His lonely communions with God, and felt, doubtless, that prayer had a closer relationship to the soul than ever they had found in formal recitations.

We would like to have that prayer of John. It could not have been unlike the prayer that Jesus communicated to His disciples. St Luke preserves the latter in its simplest form : " Father, hallowed be Thy name ! Thy Kingdom come. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also ourselves forgive every one that is indebted to us. And bring us not into temptation." The gospel of Matthew also contains the prayer, amplified to its present proportions and closing with a later doxology.

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The term "Father" was the most intimate and dearest of all the forms by which Jewish worshippers approached Jehovah. "Forgive us, our Father, for we have sinned." "Bless us, our Father, each and all, with the light of Thy countenance." "Our Father, Thou merciful Father, Thou that pitiest, have pity upon us." And this beautiful grace used before eating, "Our God, our Father, feed us, nourish us, care for us, and preserve us."

Jesus therefore did not depart from His familiar way of thought when He taught the approach to God through the endearing term of Father. His mind was steeped in the Jewish ritual and its higher spirit had possessed Him from early youth. These notes of spiritual rapture were the music to which were set the songs of aspiration in His own young soul. Even more than most boys He must often have surrendered all His emotions to these hymns of prayer and adoration. But, like other boys, He came in time to see the yawning gulf that separated the practices of life from the fervent petitions of worship. He seemed to recognize the hypnotic power of reiterated words to throw the soul into an ecstatic state; and against that form of self-delusion His clear mind protested. "Use not vain repetitions," He said to His disciples, as though in that very act lay a lurking danger. "But after this manner pray ye: Father, hallowed be Thy name." Those five simple words of address compose the mind and adjust it to the spirit of love and reverence, but the Jewish rhapsodist strained after an artificial excitement of feeling that had little

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semblance to the relationship of child and father :  
“ We will hallow thee, and Thy praise shall never depart out of our mouths to eternity.”

The mind of Jesus was far too simple and direct to lose itself in sentimentalizing about God. He was no prodigal in words. He made of them pictures of the truth. Now the truth He was teaching His disciples, in teaching them to pray, was that through communion with God, the supreme good in Life—that elusive motive that brings satisfaction and joy into the heart, that purpose which links the fragments of our experience into a divine whole ; that illumination which reveals a glorious end towards which we travel—may be discovered. It is all embraced in the Kingdom of God. Jesus lived in a very small world, but even there He saw the broken and disordered and antagonistic groups into which the family of God’s children was shattered. No hamlet was too tiny to display the universal law of human strife. It entered tragically into the little circle to whom he was speaking. The everlasting problem of finding a common motive for common action has been ever the object of search among the wisest of sages and the most saintly of saints. The problem is still unsolved. We of to-day live in our circle, or class, or trade, or profession, or, in a larger way, in our religion, nation, or race. But always there is a limit to our loyalty, beyond which dwell the people whom the Greeks called barbarians. We may seek to convert them to our faith, or add them to our unit ; but to embrace them within the circle of God’s children, as Jesus embraced the

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Syrian woman or the Samaritan leper, is beyond our power.

This divine understanding and sympathy can "come forth by nothing save by prayer and fasting," and in the Universal prayer it stands at the gateway of all our petitions. The substance of Jesus' doctrine is contained in the three words "Thy Kingdom come." This might be what some people call the "simple gospel," but Jesus had no illusions about its stupendous import. He knew the nature of man and the unremitting pressure of his inherited instincts. He never used the expression "The law of self-preservation," but he saw the workings of that law in the eager crowds that daily appealed to Him for the fulfilment of their desires. He realized that this law was an impenetrable barrier against His divine message. Once, on a great occasion, He spoke in what seems like a note of despair when He told Nicodemus that he must be born again. He meant, of course, such a revolution of will and purpose that the human child looks out upon life through the eyes of his Heavenly Father and feels towards his fellow men as the Father feels towards His children.

If such a theory of the good life had come forth from a cloister we might treat it as an impracticable dream. But Jesus was not a dreamer, and His days were spent in closest contact with human selfishness and sin. He saw all that we see of the heart of man, and He saw much else that is hidden from us. He put forth His main idea, not as a guess, but as the one solution of the soul's unrest and dissatisfaction. And to that idea the world is turn-

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ing in its desperate need. Civilization has won the power of destruction but has not achieved the power of up-building. Man has gained an absorbingly full life, but is pathetically unable to control it. After the long pursuit of political freedom, we find ourselves still fettered by our selfishness and greed. If chivalry had concerned itself as much with seeking the Kingdom of God as it did in possessing the tomb of Christ, the glory and honour of the nations would be our inheritance to-day.

It is easy to see why the burden of the Universal Prayer should be the attainment of this compelling aim of the Kingdom of God. It is a daring petition, and if the disciple were left to his own resources he might well despair. But in this great endeavour he is co-worker with God. Such words must not be lightly spoken—yet they must be spoken—for they express our eternal hope. If Christ were only a Heavenly apparition, a thread of light running through the gloom of His generation; if He were only the Preacher of the Sermon on the Mount, with its unattainable ethical code; if He were only the anticipated Messiah of the Jews—then are we of all men the most miserable. He has engaged us in an impossible task—and that He well knew. Not once, but many times He promised that we should be guided, strengthened, and upheld in seeking this Kingdom of God. He said that power would be communicated to us; and comfort and peace to our souls in following His way. He even encouraged His disciples to be heedless of the common necessities of life, and bid them be free from all anxieties



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about the future ; thus to give all their energies and affections to the supreme enterprise of building up, stone upon stone, the enduring Kingdom of God.

It is evident that the prayer of Jesus is a tremendous utterance, and not lightly to be taken on our lips. If it is not a vain repetition, it commits us to strange and unknown ways. For by the witness of Jesus, the will of God upon earth carries us far afield from the beaten tracks of human interest and makes heavy demands upon our loyalty and courage. But it is a glorious quest, inciting us to romantic adventures, freeing our souls from servitude to habit and custom, and crowning life at last with the laurel of victory. "I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

There is still another suggestion contained within these oft-repeated words. The conscience of Christendom is aroused as never before by the "unhappy divisions" which beset the fellowship of Christ. But the Churches are no longer free. Each body has received a "sacred deposit" which it feels bound to preserve for all time, and which separates it from the other bodies. All Christians feel, in these anxious days, that Christ's followers should present a united front against a common foe, but how to find the formula that is common to all and inclusive of all, has proved beyond human power. A few years ago an attempt was made to eliminate unessential doctrine and find the minimum of belief that a Christian believer might hold and

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remain within the fold. It was a pitiful travesty of a faith which demands the uttermost fidelity of heart and mind and soul ; which is in essence a bold leap into the dark, and which "tries the reins" of the most heroic adventurer for God. It is not less belief, but more, that the distresses of our time demand.

Now the formula we seek is for ever on our tongue. The sublime statement of belief which may one day arise in a mighty chorus out of the soul of a united Christendom is the petition "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

That is the whole gospel of Jesus Christ. For that end He lived among men, and, dying, passed to the bosom of His Father. It is the only authoritative creed any Church of Christ can rightly impose upon the disciple. It is the charter of a divine mission put into the keeping of each of these fragments of the Fellowship, and which in its entirety is called the "Body of Christ."

Yet Jesus was not unmindful of the claim of the body. What He saw was that even good men were torturing themselves and dissipating their spiritual energies with anxieties about the future. He had won complete freedom from care by complete trust in God. He had warned the disciples against corroding anxiety, bidding them to take no thought for the things of to-morrow, for the fight with the evils of to-day commanded all their energies. Yet the accepted interpretation of the universal prayer contains the petition : "Give us daily our bread for the coming day." This is of great importance,

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for it brings out the whole attitude of Jesus towards the business of living. His constant appeal is for spiritual freedom from the shattering cares of a complicated and absorbing world-life—"the cares of this world," He called it—but it is clear that He looked far ahead and followed, for Himself, a detailed and carefully planned course. His freedom was the result of perfect dependence and trust.

In speaking of the unworldliness of Christ, it is well to remember how fully the demands of the world absorbed all His days and often the nights. His hours of rest were few, and the periods of communion with God were a gathering of forces to meet the pressing calls of His public ministry. Even the fragmentary picture of the gospels is that of an untiring worker in His Father's vineyard. (But, if one may say so, He was free from distraction—a vessel whose inflowing and outflowing followed a law of rhythm. In singleness of purpose, in freedom from the passions and demands of a complicated life He found the secret of exhaustless power.

And it is just this distraction of an uncontrolled nature that hinders the Kingdom of God. Man is not free, because he is in bondage to the lusts and passions of his unconquered nature. The way of his highest aspirations is never clear from the obstacles of his own fitful will and his soul is torn with remorse and dissatisfaction. These inward foes, moreover, are stronger than his own good purposes. He cannot go alone, unharmed, through the jungle of life. In prayer he shall find his staff and his guide. "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive

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every one that is guilty towards us ; and lead us not into temptation. Be merciful towards past failures, and direct the erring steps through days to come.”

Only one who feels the full claim of the Kingdom of God can rise to the significance of this prayer. The coming of the Kingdom was what brought a new motive of life into the old and stricken world. Before so great an event the distinctions between men shrivelled up, the values of life were revolutionized, and the soul leaped away from the sordid earth, welcoming death as the entrance hall into the mansions of life. And it is very striking that these self-revealing words of Christ interpret the spiritual longings of all time and all faiths. They are an universal heritage, binding the centuries together and uniting into a common brotherhood the whole family of God.

It was under the influence of such words that the disciples went forth on their mission to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE CRISIS

THIS period of Jesus' ministry was drawing to a close. Mark signalizes it by a great burst of activity. Crossing the lake again to the plain of Gennesaret, the company once more moved through the villages, and the healing power of Jesus brought health to those who even but touched His garments. The evangelist has followed a true instinct in bringing into sharp contrast the mercifulness of the Christian spirit with the harsh formalities of the Jewish system. Jesus broke the bonds of disease and mental maladies. He brought health and freedom and opportunity to those who were bound in physical chains. The relation between His works of beneficence and His teaching of God was close and intimate. He moved consistently in the natural and spiritual realms. He would expect the multitude to follow Him with understanding minds as He crossed the borderland of physical release into the full liberty of the spirit. It was their dullness or hardness of heart that made the crisis in Jesus' ministry.

The local members of the strong sect of the Pharisees seem to have called upon the leaders of their party in Jerusalem to aid them in overcoming this dangerous agitation. Jesus had really committed

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grave offences against the law. He had ignored the Sabbath, spoken contemptuously of their religious practices, and had even promised forgiveness of sins. But the break came upon what seems to us a trifling matter.

The visiting scribes, quick to see offences, observed that the disciples neglected to wash their hands before eating. It was a wise and useful custom, received from the elders, that no meal should be eaten without a thorough washing of the hands and arms up to the elbow. Certainly the disciples deserve no credit for neglecting this cleanly habit. It was not a law, but one of a great number of traditions that enchained the Jews and filled his days with trifling observances.

Yet it was not a small matter. These customs of outward observance had grown sacred by long use and were a bond of unity in the national life. The scribes were quick to resent indifference to religious forms and their anger blazed out. Nor was Jesus conciliatory. Again He turned their own scripture against them. He did more than answer: He challenged. He forced the issue and used it as a point of general attack. A simple and not unnatural question was magnified into a capital offence.

These famous Pharisees from Jerusalem were, in His mind, only schoolmen. They had learned the words of their master's teaching, but had never thought of how the schools stood towards the higher truths of God's revelation. Jesus' condemnation fell upon the system. He shows how the divine command to honour father and mother and to care

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for them as a sacred duty has been debased, in their tradition, by substituting in place of the holy office a gift made to the temple. It could have been no sudden outburst of anger that inspired those bitter words. To Jesus this shifting of natural responsibility to a formality of worship was the essence of falsehood and an outrage to God. The tradition of the elders had supplanted the eternal law and was binding the free souls of the people in servitude to outward convention. The pure faith of Judaism was being choked by customs and the people deceived and misled by the accredited leaders of religion. It was war to the death between Him and the scribes. No compromise was possible. They were the enemies of the Kingdom of God. Again and again He returns to this first duty of directness and sincerity of worship. No outward form can relieve a man from the imperative duties of life. Bring your gifts to the temple altar, but if there you remember that your brother man has ought against you, leave your gifts, hasten to be reconciled to your brother and then, with a purified heart, return and make your offering to God. This is the heart of His teaching, the pure realism that saves it from extravagance and self-deception.

But Jesus truly realized that He could have no dealings with those schoolmen, whose whole interest in life was involved in the ritual and customs of formal worship. Suddenly He turns to the people and cries out : " Hear me, all ye, and understand, there is nothing from without the man that, going into him, can defile him, but the things that proceed



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out of the man are those that defile the man." Once more He breaks through the accepted tradition of His race and destroys the barriers set up between His own people and those of other lands.

Later, the disciples tell Him how deeply He has offended the Pharisees, but He answers with extraordinary bitterness. They are plants which His heavenly Father planted not and shall be rooted up. Let them alone. They are blind guides, and if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a pit. Then He explains how the thoughts and impulses of the heart are the sources of the good and evil in our lives, "but to eat with unwashen hands defileth not the man."

Thus once more He struck the C major of the Christian faith. That note is the reality of the spiritual Kingdom, in which alone the soul is bathed in the living waters of life.

But He is asking more of His hearers than they are as yet prepared to give. In turning away from the old religion of tradition and custom He compelled a choice from His disciples. It was pleasant for the crowd to listen to His thrilling message and to be partakers of His gifts; but to repudiate the long-accepted doctrines and practices of their faith was beyond their powers. He found Himself rejected as a public teacher and, for the time being, His ministry to the Jews brought to a close. Sadly and wearily He turned His back upon the familiar scenes of His whole life and departed into the country of the Gentiles.

## CHAPTER XIII

### THE OUTCAST

THIS journey, which marked a distinct epoch in the mission of Jesus, is still veiled in obscurity. Matthew and Mark distinctly say that He went away into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, two important Gentile ports on the coast of Phœnicia, but the later writers had apparently forgotten it. We have seen how anxiously Jesus had watched events, fearful lest all the people of the house of Israel might not hear the message of repentance before the Kingdom of Heaven should appear. In sending forth the twelve, He had given strict instructions that they should go only to their own countrymen. Now He Himself leaves them and goes into exile. We would like to know more about this incident. No word is given us as to the length of His sojourn in these foreign cities, nor as to the company who attended Him, nor as to His means of support. Later, He speaks of the apostles as those who had shared His trials, but it was unlikely that He set forth on so notable a journey without the companionship of other faithful followers and especially of ministering women. He owed much to these women who were near to Him in all His active life and to whom the

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singular strength and delicacy of His nature made a powerful appeal.

It was probably then a considerable company that set out from the lake country and walked over the dusty roads leading to the north. It is altogether likely that Jesus seized the occasion to explain many dark things. The future must have been clear to Him now. He had been rejected by His own people, His message spurned, and His condemnation assured. The extreme depression and bitterness of His spirit leads to an extraordinary outburst. On the way to Tyre the road took Him through the village of Chorazin, from which He could look down upon the lake and the scenes of His activity, and His saddened heart finds utterance: "Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida!" He cried, "for had such powers been shown forth in Tyre and Sidon they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes." Then His eye sinks to the lake beneath Him and He exclaims: "And thou, Capernaum, oughtest thou not to be lifted up to Heaven? Thou shalt be brought down to Hell; for had such powers been shown forth in Sodom, as have been shown forth in thee, it would be still standing this day. But I say unto you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee."

This bitter lamentation was, of course, spoken to impress the company, and was remembered as an outburst of anguish. But they might have had another purpose also. It was a decisive moment in the lives of the disciples. Until now they had been associated with a popular movement and had

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been swept along on a torrent of enthusiasm. Henceforth they were to be tested by the treachery and cruelty of man. The reader has the feeling that Jesus is bent upon strengthening the bond which binds them to Him. He becomes more intimate in His talks, more insistent upon the glories of the Kingdom of God and of the rewards that awaited them. They were to receive a hundredfold for all their pains and sacrifices here.

At the same time His attitude towards those who seek the benefits and security of the Kingdom becomes strangely harsh and cold. A man promises to follow Him wherever He goes. Jesus chills his enthusiasm by pointing out that while foxes have holes and birds nests, He has no place to lay His head. Another man would follow Him after he had paid the last rites to his dead father. Jesus rudely replies: "Let the dead bury their dead,"—a reply which, taken by itself, has neither meaning nor humanity. Yet another man would follow Him, but wished first to bid farewell to his family. Jesus retorts: "No one that looketh back, after he has once put his hand to the plough, is ready for the Kingdom of God."

These are illuminating scenes. They show the intensity of the strain under which Jesus now laboured. The approaching Kingdom of God is a menace as well as a joyous hope. It admits of no rival interest or affections. It is the one good which transcends all other forms of good. It is the "perfect round" of which government, society, and family are but "broken arcs." Jesus pressed

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the absolute claim of the Kingdom, now nigh at hand, and sometimes His language shrieked against the obstacles which obstruct the believers' path.

But this mood of anger or sorrow passed away. There were other anxieties attending this journey. The company were now among strangers, and the question of food and shelter was serious even for their simple needs. Jesus had not concerned Himself with these practical necessities. In the homeland, His daily needs were easily administered to. Four of the apostles were fishermen, and the band was never far from the lake. Now, they had neither friends nor trade to depend upon. Perhaps the situation was explained to Jesus, and St Luke makes His answer some of those trustful thoughts that St Matthew has gathered into the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus was ever impressed with the load of anxiety men carried through life. He was constantly warning His disciples to rid themselves of the cares of this world and to be free in spirit. "The soul is more than food, and the body than raiment." Look at the ravens, He cries, they neither reap nor gather into barns. Look at the lilies of the field, they neither toil nor spin, yet the glory of Solomon pales in the presence of their beauty. If God cares for these, how much more for you, His children. It is heroic, but the language is that of poetical rhapsody rather than of prosaic statement. Jesus was well aware of that, but He had a great lesson to teach. He was seeking to share His confidence and trust in God and to banish the spectres of fear and doubt

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from the minds of His followers. Seek the Kingdom, He said, and all needful things will come. Even if hunger, persecution, and death be your lot, the Heavenly Father is still caring for you. This is the supreme conquest of the spirit. It rises to a state of perfect liberty and watches the prizes of the world slip away without a sigh.

In all this worry there is not even a suggestion that the power that could at a moment's notice feed a multitude of five thousand could, without effort, have provided the little band with abundant feasts. Apparently Jesus was as subject to the common laws of life, as helpless against want, as the least of His disciples.

His strength came from a deeper source. He was no magic worker, but through Him flowed the saving powers of the universe. His illustrations suggest that. He was close to the earth—a child of nature. He must often have been in Jerusalem, but even in that city of His fathers He was an alien—a provincial rustic. He was of the soil and the working class, and the miracles of nature were daily enacted before His eyes. He leaves us with a sense of the perfect harmony between His spirit and the secrets of the physical world which to Him mirrored the beneficence and care of God.

Yet it must be added that Christianity is not a nature religion. Jesus was by no means unmindful of the wanton waste of nature's processes. He saw the seed burning upon the rocks and choked among the weeds. Nature pays little regard for individual life and squanders the million seed to produce one

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perfect flower. Ravens and lilies could tell a tragic story of nature's fierce cruelty. It was Jesus' reading of nature that is significant, and that made His contribution to the sum of human knowledge. His was not the fatalistic philosophy of the East, nor the drama of vengeful deities which delighted the Greek. It was the serene and joyful confidence of a soul which had dwelt with God and found that God is love.

It is clear that these days of exile were devoted mainly to instructing the twelve and preparing them for their future life. But one delightful incident has crept into the narrative, in which the wit of a Gentile woman prevailed over the will of Jesus. Even in Tyre the fame of the Galilean Healer drew a great crowd. The little band sought to hide themselves in a house, but the suffering love of motherhood penetrated into the hiding-place with a passionate prayer that Jesus would heal her daughter, who had an unclean spirit. Jesus' curt reply suggests that His inward calm had not wholly returned. He was a guest in that house and country, yet He replied to this poor suppliant: "Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it unto dogs." It was a cruel answer, but for once He had met a spirit as determined and persistent as His own. She challenged Him: "Yea, Lord: even the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs."

This is one of several occasions when we regret the reticence of the gospels. Mark makes Jesus reply: "For this saying go thy way; the devil has gone



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out of thy daughter." But we can imagine the start that her brave answer gave to Him. He must have looked at her not only with sympathy but with admiration and surprise. Great was her love and great her daring.

Our knowledge of this journey to the Gentile country is very slight. We are told that the company travelled northward as far as Sidon, the other of those two Phœnician cities which were already important ports two thousand years before Jesus was born. From there a homing instinct drew them back to the lake country, passing through the mountainous region of Naphtali and reaching at last the heathen land of Decapolis—or the ten cities—on the north-east border of the lake. From there they made a short excursion into their own region, but soon set forth again moving northward until they reached the suburbs of the great city, Cæsarea Philippi.

All that is recorded of these memorable days repeats what we already know of Jesus' power over the infirmities of the flesh. He gave hearing to the deaf and sight to the blind. Again He fed a multitude which had been three days in the wilderness, but this astonishing event made so slight an impression upon the disciples that we soon see them in a state of great worry over their own food supply.

At this point the records are most unsatisfactory. We have heard, over and over, the writers' interpretations of the wonderful things they recorded, but upon the discourses of Jesus during those critical days they are strangely silent. This silence is the

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more unaccountable because their narratives are approaching the most important event they have so far reached. In spite of all they had seen and heard, the disciples were singularly dull of understanding. "Their hearts were hardened" is the naïve explanation vouchsafed to us ; and sometimes even the Master was seemingly impatient with their obtuseness.

At all times, and especially during this period of retirement we must believe, Jesus had been preparing the apostles for the great moment when they should receive the full revelation of His divine mission. We have seen how patiently He sought to protect the people from any form of deception. He knew that He was the expected Messiah, but He also knew how their passionate patriotism had led their minds astray. At this time the most spiritual of the prophets, who had taught that the Messianic Kingdom was not of this world, were forgotten or unheeded.

Now the hour had come when the disciples must learn this mighty truth and we are sure that, as they walked together over the mountains, Jesus opened His heart to them as never before. Perhaps bits of those sayings are scattered through the gospels, but we would like to have the full report of discourses such as man never spake to man. This talk must have been not only illuminating but most tender and confidential, for when it comes into view we see that the hearts of all are overflowing with emotion.

He had but just refused to give the "sign," or proof, that the Pharisees demanded, and had warned

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the disciples against these teachers. It is possible that not only the crowds, but the disciples themselves, had been affected by His refusal to win confidence by magic-working. If so, it only served to tighten His hold upon them.

It was while climbing the steep road which led from the lake to Cæsarea Philippi, 1800 feet above, that Jesus puts the great question to His most intimate followers: "Whom do men say that I am?" or, as Matthew gives it: "Whom do men say that the Son of Man is?" It is possible that in a moment of exile and apparent failure Jesus longed for human understanding and support, but it is much more probable that the question followed a long course of personal teaching. It seems like a mere preparation for the more important question that was to follow.

The disciples were far too considerate to repeat the ugly saying of the Pharisees that He was the emissary of Beelzebub, the prince of devils, but they told Him that some, including King Herod, thought He was John the Baptist returned to life; others, that Jeremiah or Elijah had come back to earth, and still others likened Him to the inspired prophets of olden times.

Jesus had opened the way for His great question: "But whom say ye that I am?" It was Peter, the closest friend of Jesus, who had lived with Him day and night in the intimacy of his own family circle, who makes the immortal answer: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." The account in Matthew brings us nearest to the source.

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We see Jesus, there, deeply stirred by this outburst of exulting faith and His answer reveals His emotion : " Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona ; for flesh and blood have not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in Heaven." It was in truth a stupendous avowal. Never before, probably, had the fortunes of that little band of religious enthusiasts been so low. Their Master was an outcast from His own people, rejected and condemned by the rulers of the synagogues, poor and despised and forsaken. And such a Man was the fulfilment of their age-long hope. Flesh and blood, human reason or insight, gave never so marvellous a vision to a simple-minded fisherman. The heart of Jesus is uplifted. He has seen the herald of victory : " Thou art Peter [Petros]," He cried, " and upon this rock [petra] I will build my church ; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven."

We are on a high tableland of emotion now. There had been earlier suggestions of the mystery of Christ's nature and calling. These may have been gleams of understanding shining for a moment in the mental darkness and quickly lost, but now at last the soul of Peter was flooded with the heavenly vision, as was Paul's at a later day.

But what did Jesus mean by that rhapsody of mixed metaphors ? Those few words of grateful acknowledgment have mightily affected the history

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of civilization for two thousand years. Peter, the rock of the Church, founded the first group of believers in the Imperial City. There, upon an inverted cross, he bore his last witness of love and devotion to his Master. And we all know how the assembly of Christians in Rome grew from strength to strength, reaching out its arm of support and power to other assemblies round about it ; winning ascendancy by its position and wealth, until the time came when its Bishop claimed and received the homage of Christendom. Peter was the rock upon which the Church of Christ was built and that rock was planted in Rome. The pre-eminent authority of Peter in the apostolic band was handed down to his episcopal successors who sat in his seat, and they, like him, became Christ's vicars upon earth.

That simple argument, still repeated in thousands of pulpits throughout the world, has brought infinite woe into human history. The fisherman has become an Emperor ; his cabinet of advisers, princes. It is true that Peter may have founded many other Churches, but only that in the capital of the Empire had the opportunity and the will to seize the sceptre of power.

Was it to that end that Jesus, exiled from His own Church and country, gave His full trust and confidence to the man He loved ? Did He foresee the growth of the little brotherhood into the most powerful empire the earth has ever known, and choose that Peter should be its imperial head ? Did He come into the life of man in order to destroy one autocratic system of religion and set up another, a

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thousand times more autocratic, in its stead? All that we know of the divine life and teaching contradicts this monstrous idea, and yet that idea, for hundreds of generations, has ruled the world.

The seeds of a Church were undoubtedly planted by Jesus, but the word (*Ecclesia*) occurs but twice in the gospels and seems to refer to the existing brotherhood of disciples. If Jesus ardently believed that the Kingdom of God was to come even in that generation, there was no place for a permanent organization of believers. The powers to bind and loose that were conferred upon Peter were afterwards bestowed upon all the brethren.

But Peter, by his spiritual insight and acumen, had won the place of leadership among the others. To him, when the Master was no more with them, they were to look for guidance on their perilous path. He had discovered the innermost secret of Jesus' soul. He was their rock, and upon the truth of his avowal the assembly of Christians would for ever build their faith. Upon earth and in heaven it would be the test of discipleship. To this end came He forth that His disciples, in all ages, should proclaim: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God."

The crisis in Jesus' mission had now been reached and passed. Thenceforth the path was clear and it led straight to Calvary. Jesus no longer regarded Himself as an outcast. His place was among His own people. The cross stood out clear upon the horizon of His vision, but His heart was full of peace and joy. He had saved the people from the be-

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witching illusion of a political Messiah, but He had laid the foundations of the Kingdom of Heaven.

For the remainder of His short life He was to demonstrate the reality of this Kingdom and its authority over the wills of men.

But others must learn the truth, as Peter learned it, through spiritual experience. Therefore He bade His followers to tell no man. And then, very lovingly and earnestly, He unrolled the future before their eyes. He showed them "how He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up."

Again the figure of Peter stands out. He had seen a light, but it had not lighted the whole way. He could not believe that the Son of God could suffer indignity from the hands of men, and his impetuous tongue must needs break in to assure his Lord that such things would never be. Jesus' calm ascendancy—His inviolable mastery—was never more clearly manifest than when, in that moment of love and gratitude, he puts Peter once more into his rightful place as a learner of the truth.

Then His voice shades into the soft tones of spiritual musing, as though He was overlooking the whole panorama of life. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." And then the great paradox: "For whosoever would save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall save it. For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and forfeit his life? Or what shall a man give



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in exchange for his life ? ” And then His spirit passes into vision. He sees the triumph of the Son of Man, coming back to the scenes of His agony in the glory of His Father with His angels. He sees the great judgment when God’s truth shall prevail. And His vision is not of some far-distant age but of the day that is soon to dawn.

Belovéd Dreamer of the world of light. Even now, in Thy ascended glory, doth Thy pitying eye watch over the futile struggles, the ignorance and sorrow of Thy children, and see in this troubled world “ the Son of Man coming in his Kingdom ! ”

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE TRANSFIGURATION

WE can hardly live over again, in our imagination, the profound emotions that stirred the souls of all in that hour of enlightenment. To us Christ is established ; His reign is accepted, and His authority acknowledged by all Christendom. Then, He was the discredited leader of a small, and humble following, whose rhapsody was not lacking in pathos. Faith in His Messiahship was a wild leap into the unknown. By His own words He was to pass through experiences of bitter humiliation and suffering at the hands of His own people. He was to bring fierce hatred and division even into the closest family circles. Before the world of His day He was to stand as an impostor and as a mad fanatic. No Jew had ever heard of such a Messiah as this. He, who had been pictured in the past as suffering for the transgressions of His people, was not their victim but their wounded and enduring leader in a common affliction. But this Christ was despised and rejected by the world without being highly exalted among His own.

Jesus put a great strain upon the credulity of His disciples, and it is not likely that less simple natures

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could have received His words with unquestioning faith.

Yet this was not all credulity nor surrender to a compelling personality. These men and women, simple as they were, must have had an unshakable conviction in the integrity of God's universe. How else could they have believed, however fitfully or dimly, in the final triumph of their Lord? For to them, as to us, the resurrection was a spiritual assurance of God's power to banish the powers of evil. All experience was to contradict what they saw that day with eyes of the spirit, but the vision of a Kingdom of Truth and Love grew ever clearer through suffering. They came to face the cruelties of powerful foes, not so much with patience, as with defiance and inward joy. These afflictions were but for a moment; were dreams and shadows. They walked among the realities of a spiritual world where men did not seek to hurt nor destroy one another; but to upbuild and save.

That was the eternal conflict which Jesus foresaw and which is ever present in human life. Two irreconcilable spirit forces must ever struggle for dominion in every human soul; and one of these belongs to Christ. It is the old question of what is most worth while in any man's career—of what brings a lasting sense of satisfaction—of what is real success. Jesus gave one answer.

By the natural course of events we would expect the story of the Transfiguration to be closely linked with the deep emotions through which the family of Jesus had just passed. To our modern eyes it

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appears like a dramatic presentation of Jesus' words. This is the more impressive because Jesus again enjoins silence upon what has taken place until He is risen from the dead. The disciples are puzzled by this statement as though they were now hearing it for the first time. They had been taught to believe that before the Messianic era Elijah must first come ; and Jesus assures them that, in the person of John the Baptist, Elijah had indeed prepared the way for Messiah's appearing. He predicts that the Son of Man must "suffer many things and be set at nought."

Now all of this conversation seems to belong to those sacred hours when Jesus revealed His great secret to His disciples. But the evangelists, writing many years later, are precise as to the time of the occurrence on the Mount. Matthew and Mark place it six days after Peter's confession and Luke says it was eight days afterwards. If Peter wrote the second epistle that stands in his name, he insists that he was an eye-witness to the remarkable scene. He, together with James and John, saw the gleaming figures of Moses and Elijah as they talked to the Messiah, whose "garments had become glistening, exceeding white : so as no fuller on earth can whiten them." Moreover, he declared that he heard a voice out of the overshadowing cloud, saying :—"This is my beloved Son : hear ye Him." That is strong testimony as to an actual happening in the physical world. It cannot be explained, nor turned into an allegory, but it shows once more the wide mental gulf which separates that age from our own.

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Likewise the story of the glittering figures on the mountain top throws into deep shadow the scene of human suffering which confronts Jesus and His three companions when they again appear. They were met at the foot of the Mount by the other disciples and a great crowd with scribes among them, suggesting that the scene is laid in Galilee. The glory which surrounded Jesus on the Mount had not left Him, for the whole multitude were greatly amazed and saluted Him. Then one of them explained to Jesus that he had brought his epileptic son to Him, and, not finding Him, had asked the disciples to cure the afflicted boy. It is an agonizing story—like some of those Zola has pictured in *Lourdes*—but Jesus assures the father that all things are possible to him that believed. He does believe and cries for help. Then Jesus justifies his faith and the boy is cured.

These two scenes make the complete picture. It shows how true and deep was the insight of the writer into the mysterious depths of Jesus' nature. He was no accident. The stream of power which flowed through Him had its rise in the measureless power of God. In spiritual communion with the divine messengers of other times He drew unwearying strength. He was always prepared, because He was always preparing. He gave without limit, because He was always drawing from a limitless source. Between Him and those who, through the ages, had prepared the way for Him was the most intimate communion of understanding and purpose. For a moment, at least, Peter and James and John

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shared with Him the vision of His destiny. But it is a remarkable feature of the gospels that no attempt is made to present the disciples as having clear or steadfast minds. They were in daily contact with sights and deeds that filled them with awe and wonder but left no lasting impression of the divinity that surrounded them. The feeding of the multitude is immediately followed by a painful scene of anxiety and fear as to their own food supply. And now, after all they had experienced, their minds were baffled by an exhibition of healing power that surpassed their own. It was in answer to their perplexity that Jesus makes the immortal answer: "This kind can come out by nothing, save by prayer and fasting."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE GREAT DECISION

THE confession of Peter gave a new turn to the flow of events in Jesus' ministry. It brought the momentous decision of advancing into the heart of the enemy's country and there proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Until such an avowal as Peter's, Jesus was forced to seek safety in exile and patiently instruct the twelve until the light should break upon them. Now, He felt that the future was secure and that He could approach the hour of supreme sacrifice with full assurance that His mission would still be carried out.

During these days we can feel the steady pressure of His personality upon His disciples. His words are more fully recorded and miraculous acts seem less important. The tension of the crisis is felt in those grave and tender discourses in which He unfolded the future to the twelve. These were precious days. The record is an illuminated missal, and on every incident the heart dwells lovingly with mingled wonder and grief.

The journey to Jerusalem from Cæsarea Philippi was a hundred and seven miles and would have taken at least fifty hours. Such a journey was not



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lightly undertaken under the best conditions, but in this instance there were ominous signs that there would be no return from the fateful trip. Perhaps it was this anticipation that took the band back to Capernaum where, for some of the twelve, important last arrangements had to be made. There, among the scenes of the blessed ministry of their Master, the disciples first learned the meaning of His rejection by the rulers. Mark says that they "passed through Galilee" unrecognized, until they came to Capernaum, and that on the way Jesus opened out the future to His followers. He spoke of His sufferings and death and then He spoke of that enigmatical rising from the tomb after three days.

He seems only to have further confused their minds. A sense of impending disaster possessed them, but their tongues were tied. They became aware that they were following a discredited Prophet and questionings arose about their own future. Perhaps they were also disturbed by the incident with Peter; but even he was not free from fear that his loyalty and sacrifice might pass unnoticed. It was a time of testing and strain. The whole outlook had changed. They were no longer the central figures of enthusiastic crowds but objects of suspicion, even of hatred, to the rulers. Yet there is no sign at this point of any wavering among the intimate disciples. They had a partial understanding of what Jesus meant by the Kingdom of Heaven and felt themselves to be the chosen leaders in a new order. Jesus had so often told them that the crisis was near at hand that it is small wonder if they were con-

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cerned about the places they were to fill when the day of triumph dawned.

These thoughts seemed to fill their minds on the long journey from Cæsarea Philippi to Jerusalem. The question of precedence among them was very much in the foreground. Peter had received not only a mark of approval but something like a commission, and he was not the sort of man to let the others lose sight of it. Nor was the mother of James and John the sort of woman to let such a claim pass unchallenged. The question of who would be greatest continued with them on the sad journey and occasioned some of the most precious sayings of Jesus that the gospels record.

They were still in Capernaum when Jesus felt the spirit of discord and asked them what they had been saying to one another. They dared not reply but He understood. Then He began to open their eyes to the nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, and again and again, during these last days, He returned to it, sometimes in words of solemn warning and prophecy, sometimes illustrating by example, and sometimes flashing new light upon it by one of His incomparable picture lessons.

The main theme is always the same. In the Kingdom of Heaven life is not a struggle for personal position or authority but a life of common love and service. Its activity and joy is not in seeking the most favoured place but in uplifting the lowly. It is forgetful of self but it searches after the outcasts and wandering. Upon this theme Jesus gives full play to His love of opposites—the first shall be last ;

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the last first : he who finds his life shall lose it, and he who loses it shall find it. In Capernaum, and again later, He mirrors the Kingdom of God in a little child. Even now the mothers of little children brought them to Him, and Jesus warmed their hearts by His grave and protecting love. In them He read the mystery of spiritual rebirth ; in their helplessness, dependence and unquestioning trust. His mind kept close to nature. It was part of His absolute confidence in God that all the common things of life were revelations of a Father's care. He was country-bred and had that intimate fellowship with the world of sense about Him that was a constant suggestion of a divine purpose. He knows nothing of "original sin" in the little children who were brought to Him. The heart that was open to them was prepared to receive Him also. Such as they were alone worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Their innocence was so sacred that, rather than offend one of them, it was better to suffer the cruel punishment of the lake district and be drowned with a great millstone about the neck.

The human beauty and tenderness of Christ's attitude towards all dependent things may cause us to forget how stern a command He laid upon His disciples. He had not consulted the twelve upon this visit to Jerusalem, yet He believed that He was leading some of them to death. The question of what was good was open to debate. Peter was deeply involved in it. He had left all to follow Him, and Peter's all was just what made life desirable. We can feel that the choice was in the balance,

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and it suggests the tremendous personal power of Jesus that, as the days slipped by in earnest converse, Peter and the others did see, though perhaps but dimly, that the supreme good lay, not in the fulfilment of natural instinct, but in the possession of the Kingdom of Heaven. No flesh and blood could reveal to an ardent spirit like his that it was a greater good to be poor, despised, outcast, to fill a lowly place and to minister like a servant, than to possess happiness, position, and domestic love. Jesus Himself cannot explain this mystery. He told Nicodemus that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven a man must be born again—have a new view of life ; a new circle of desires. But He has no answer to give to an intelligent question. His mind flies backward to His boyhood day when He sat on the hillside above His home and brooded over the mystery of the wind, the sound of which He heard but the source of which was shrouded in obscurity. He knew that He was being led by a power outside Himself and greater than Himself and that in obedience to that power He found the perfect life.

In those last days at Capernaum great decisions were made. The twelve went forth stripped of their possessions and joined to an unpopular cause. A few poor people received a moment's benefit from their surrender. They themselves were learning the profound truth that power belongeth to them who seek the good of others rather than their own.

## CHAPTER XVI

### TOWARDS JERUSALEM

JESUS had planned to be in Jerusalem at the time of the Feast of the Passover. He had doubtless often been there at this same festival, as became a devout Jew. This visit, however, had another purpose than to make an offering in the temple. He went where the people were gathered, to proclaim the coming of the Kingdom of God and to seal His message through death. The great crisis had now passed and the future must have stood out clearly in His mind. Luke tells us that "He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," but that before setting out He sent messengers into Samaria to learn if the band could pass through that country with safety. Jesus had often used these enemies of the Jews to illustrate the human qualities of gratitude and kindness in contrast to the hard-heartedness of His own countrymen. Now He learnt the fierceness of their antagonism and He decided to take the longer route, crossing the river to the east side and passing down through the non-Jewish country of Peræa.

But here again He came into contact with a mortal foe in the person of Herod-Antipas, who had put

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John the Baptist to death. Luke tells us that He was warned by the Pharisees to depart out of that country, for "Herod would fain kill thee." Then the anger of Jesus blazes forth. "Go and say to that fox," (that cowardly incarnation of rapacity and cruelty), He cries, "Behold, I cast out devils and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected." He is drawn to the Holy City and no earthly power shall hinder Him. The Holy City—the centre of the nation's life and worship—it is there, there, in that sacred place,—that the prophets of God must needs perish. The horrible satire of it all rages within Him. He will cast out devils, will perform cures, will make life whole and beautiful and happy for man, but His own feet are set towards His Father's house, and there they will mock Him and scourge Him and crucify Him. Then the frozen waters in His heart melt and break, sweeping out in a torrent of love and yearning, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her own brood under her wings, and ye would not!"

It is true that not all the prophets had suffered there; yet it was needful that His own immortal sacrifice should be made in no obscure place, but before all the world and in sight of all men. And so it proved to be.

We are not given the details of this last journey. The company set out from Capernaum and we meet with them again in Jericho. It is likely that many days

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passed between and that Jesus again exercised His ministry as He passed through the towns and villages.

But into this period all three evangelists crowd many incidents and sayings of utmost importance. The scene as a whole is full of sadness. The Pharisees appear at every step seeking to entrap Him by some hasty word. At every stage of the journey He is brought face to face with enemies. His repeated forecasts of His impending fate reveal the melancholy which haunted His mind. Even the three most intimate apostles were strangely wanting in understanding.

One of the evangelists mentions that He walked at the head of the company. That is how we think of Him : proud and purposeful, steadfast in mind, firm of foot, upright and unbending, the Guide and Leader of men.

We have to thank the trickery of the Pharisees for some of the most illuminating of Jesus' words. They seem to have quite misunderstood His teaching, believing that He held the law lightly and inculcated moral looseness. We must remark how wisely or cunningly their questions were framed. On one occasion it was a test question upon their universally accepted law of divorce : " Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife ? " Now this was not a sincere seeking after knowledge, for in the code of Moses (Deuteronomy xxiv.) the law was distinctly stated, and Jesus presses that home upon them. Obedience to legal command was the first step in moral progress. Nevertheless that command was but a social expedient, a bulwark set up to



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restrain the flood of irresponsible human passions. It was part of the early discipline in social living—a primary lesson in the long study of the divine law. These Pharisees would stop at the low grade of knowledge, but Jesus saw the problem in the whole. Behind the legal code there was to be seen the completed purpose of God. “From the beginning of creation, male and female, made he them . . . and the twain became one flesh; so that they were no more twain but one flesh.”

Jesus dwelt much upon this theme in private discourse with the disciples. It was one of His few excursions into the shadowy social world that He believed was soon to pass away; but it is of the utmost importance to an understanding of the firm foundations and enduring superstructure of His moral Kingdom. It explains His philosophy or interpretation of life. Rules and conventions and institutions which support human society are part of God's plan in the education of mankind. But they are imperfect reflections of the divine law which is of the very substance of things. Life is like the surface of the ocean, fitful, variable, and restless; but beneath is the calm and unchanging current which moves, resistlessly, on its appointed way. The eye of Jesus was fixed upon that divine current. No doubt or cynicism could enter into His soul, for the power in which He trusted never faltered nor failed. Yea was always Yea; and Nay, Nay. Just so was the fidelity of man and woman rooted in the beginning and the end of creation.

It was on this journey that Jesus came into con-

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tact with the rich young man whom we have already noticed. It was a memorable encounter and is attuned to the mood of the moment. The incident shows that the appeal of Jesus' words was still powerful, for this unknown youth was clearly of a different world from that in which the little Christian band lived and had their being. His proper place would have been among the stoics or sceptics of Rome.

His is a very modern figure, and we should all have admired him and have predicted a brilliant future for him. His wealth gave him position; we may be sure that his friends were carefully chosen. Not only did he fulfil the moral and social duties of a responsible citizen, but he had a fine courtesy and an open mind towards the rustic preacher. He was not poor, nor sick, nor afflicted, yet on the very threshold of a most privileged career he longed for something he did not possess. That in itself is significant and explains why Jesus was sorrowful over His failure to win him.

Jesus meets him on his own plane and, choosing out of the Ten Commandments those which dealt with social and moral life, bids him observe their teachings. Of course He knew that He was taking the glory out of the cloud that hung over the imagination of the susceptible youth. He pulled him down to earth and its common tasks and chilled his romantic spirit. It was cruel kindness, but deception was far more cruel, and in his exalted emotionalism that young man was self-deceived. Jesus made him begin at the beginning and see the distance that

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separated him from the unpopular cause. From his youth up he had kept all the requirements of the law. That was well, but "one thing thou lacketh," said Jesus, and His eyes searched the secret heart of that admirable and upright spirit: "Go, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor; and come and follow me."

These terrible words revealed the gulf which separated them. It is not strange that he went away sorrowful, nor that Jesus watched him go with a saddened heart. If this tragic choice were made the universal condition of the Kingdom of God it would not have lingered long in the thoughts of men. It shows the indifference to the laws of social living that we have remarked before in the teaching of Jesus. By making this young man poor He would have only added to the confusion and misery of the world. But Jesus was not thinking of the world. It was passing away, and its honours and riches counted for nothing. All it had to offer was at His command and, in His mind, all its gifts were chains and fetters. What did count was the Kingdom of God, and to attain that was like the swimmer's last desperate effort to reach the shore. Jesus' whole nature was pitched to the heroic key. He ventured all for the one supreme good and counted all things but loss if He might win that.

The young man also sought the Kingdom. He would add it to the sum of his possessions, thus winning felicity in two worlds. He will ever remain the universal rich young man who is mildly good

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and who looks warily upon the safe high roads of life. He failed to meet the challenge of a unique opportunity and to venture on an untried way. His

“ Was the unlit lamp and the unloosed loin.”

This interpretation, however, is not that given in the Gospel of the Hebrews. In that early record Jesus is portrayed as aroused to anger and replying to the protestation of the youth: “ How canst thou say ‘ I have fulfilled the law and the Prophets ’ ? For it says in the law ‘ Love thy neighbour as thyself ’ and, behold, many brethren of thine, sons of Abraham, are dying of hunger in the midst of dirt, and though thy house is rich in many goods, nothing of all these goeth forth to them.” This too is modern.

This episode does not stand alone. It is followed immediately by other incidents which show how acute was the crisis that the Master met on His way to Jerusalem. The atmosphere was charged with thoughts of compensations and rewards. Peter takes a bargaining tone and must be assured that so much sacrifice will be paid with interest in the new Kingdom. The sons of Zebedee are eager to sit on the highest seat. There is much questioning and reckoning among the disciples.

It is fortunate that we can read these scenes in the light of their future careers. At this moment their minds are in the confusion of half-knowledge, and we have the feeling that there is a clash of faith and doubt, a struggle between perfect trust in their

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Master and desire for proof of the reality of His dreams.

At any rate they touched the bottom of the problem as it presented itself to their minds and Jesus understood. He answered them according to their need, not in the spirit of bargaining but in the large profusion of unlimited resources. For all their losses they were to receive a hundredfold reward in this life; and, in the world to come, life everlasting. Peter's actual reward was to suffer death by crucifixion upon an inverted cross. The obituary of James is written in Acts xii. 2; "And he (Herod) killed James the brother of John with the sword." This was about the year 44. Tradition has it that John drank the cup of poison and came forth from the bath of boiling oil, unscathed, to die at last amidst the glories of the New Jerusalem upon the rock of Patmos. How patiently and gently Jesus led His disciples through this period of questioning and doubt. He puts Himself close to them. Even His language takes on material figures. He is willing to speak of glories and triumphs and thrones and powers to these ardent fishermen and peasants, as though such dignity came within their humble experience. But behind the material figure there is the fierce insistence upon the spiritual law of compensation. This unfair and cruel world shall not win dominion over the Heavenly City; the Kings of the Earth shall not reign there. But they who are great shall minister there and they who are first shall be as servants there.

This grave statement, which is repeated in many

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forms, brings us into the heart of the Christian system. Its prizes are the rewards of the spirit and are won only through surrender and sacrifice of natural instinct. In our absorbing world these prizes seem but visionary ideals, but no one can come into the atmosphere of Jesus without feeling the intensity of His insistence upon reality. His ruthless treatment of shams and pretences are among the most dramatic incidents in the gospel narrative. Moreover, without attempting a systematic philosophy of life, He brought His disciples under the universal law of human progress. The surrender and sacrifice of things of lower worth for those of higher has urged the race forward and upward through countless generations. He Himself dwelt in unclouded confidence and in perfect unity with God, the spirit of all created things, and there He found not only the mystical power by which He wrought inexplicable deeds, but that complete serenity of soul which was a light unto His path throughout all the dark way He travelled. All thoughtful men come at last to bewail their half-knowledge, their blurred vision, and their fragmentary lives. They are obsessed with a feeling of unreality in the world of sense, and haunted by a dream of a better world where appearance and reality are one. There, is light and truth and blessedness; and their spirits yearn for it. That was the Kingdom of God and, so utterly was Jesus absorbed in it, that it seemed close at hand.

We are to picture the company of people marching south all this time, with Jesus leading the way.

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Sometimes they were surrounded by throngs of suppliants and sometimes quite alone in the waste lands, but the tension of those sacred days of communion is never absent. We notice how persistently and gently Jesus seeks to prepare His disciples for the tragedy He foresaw and how stubbornly they clung to their misconceptions. No words, not even the words of the Son of God, can reach the source of the new life. That came to them only through time and experience.

At last the party reached the ford of the Jordan, near Jericho, and crossed the stream into Jewish territory. The fame of Jesus had preceded Him, showing that rumour had travelled faster than He, and a great crowd awaited His arrival. All the synoptic gospels contain a story of the healing of a blind man, named Bartimæus, but Luke also records a thoroughly characteristic incident of defiance to public feeling with which Jesus again greeted His countrymen. Jericho was a border town, the seat of a customs station, and the chief publican of the place was a little, disreputable person named Zacchæus. This man justified the hatred of the Jews towards his class. By his own confession he was a thief, and his money wrung from the poor. Luke has not drawn an amiable figure nor given a justifiable explanation of the Lord's action. It is true that the little man was pleased and grateful for the notice taken of him, and made a sort of bargain to restore his ill-gotten gains, with fourfold interest, as well as to part with a half of his wealth. But he leaves us cold, and our sym-



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pathy remains with his victims. Jesus was deeply impressed and declared that salvation had come to that house, for "he also is a son of Abraham." Then He repeats, that "the Son of man is come to save that which was lost."

But our thoughts will stray back to the young man who was also rich and who, throughout his life, had been loyal to the light he had received. Of him the Master had asked not half, but all his possessions. Was salvation denied him because he had kept the law and walked in the ways of his fathers?

It is a question that must be asked, and it suggests a law of ascending demands according to the gifts of life. It is clear that the appeal of Jesus was checked by a wall of respectability and convention which surrounded the rich youth and that only complete surrender could make him free. Zachæus was defenceless, and the words of Jesus went straight to his soul. No demand, except of hospitality, was made upon him, but the instinct of gratitude drove him to impulsive action. In Jesus' eyes, his half more than equalled the other's whole.

The gospel of St Luke follows this episode with the famous parable of the nobleman who, going to a far country, entrusted his money to the care of his ten servants and who, returning, required of them a reckoning. "Because he was nigh to Jerusalem" it is suggested that this story is a free rendering of a recent historical event. Thirty years or so before, Archelaus, the last of the Herods, had gone to Rome to be confirmed as the governor of Judea and Samaria. At the same time the Jews sent a deputa-

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tion to say, "We will not that this man reign over us." On his return, after a successful mission, Archelaus rewarded the officials of his court according to the loyalty they had shown during his absence. Some of his enemies were punished with death.

This event was still fresh in Jewish minds, and Jesus uses it to foretell the long journey He was to take and the trust He was committing to His disciples. On that fearful Day of Judgment they would be judged by their fidelity to this trust. And, keeping close to the historical parallel, He utters the awful prediction: "These mine enemies, which would not that I should rule over them, bring hither and slay before me."

These were some of the happenings on that memorable journey. The company was now climbing the desolate road from Jericho to Jerusalem, three thousand six hundred feet above. Luke keeps the picture before our eyes: "He went on before, going up to Jerusalem," pressing forward over the steep, rough way; passing by, unheedingly, the caves and ravines infested with robbers, eagerly reaching forward to the grand climax whereby His ministry should be crowned in the supreme sacrifice.

## CHAPTER XVII

### THE LAST PHASE

THE intense concentration of purpose which had led the Master on to the Holy City was now made manifest in His speech and acts. The Jesus of Galilee, whose simplest words were poetical pictures, whose deeds of mercy brought sunshine into dark places, whose fancy played over the natural world like a sunbeam—that Jesus disappears from the story. The Man we now follow is no rustic poet, but a hardened warrior. On every side He is pressed by relentless enemies. He is fighting with His back to the wall with desperate courage. The changed conditions pervade the records, like the chill of a sea mist. We miss the atmosphere of the open country. The city streets are mean and narrow, cramping the mind. Days of endless disputation follow one after the other. Jesus Himself uses extraordinary violence of language and exercises amazing mental agility, but we long for the serenity and charm of the earlier days. He had come to Jerusalem to put Himself into the full glare of history, and to announce, not only to that generation, but to all future time, the stupendous meaning of His mission. Until now we have heard His constant warnings to grateful

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recipients of His mercy to "tell no man," lest the secret of His Messiahship should be discovered and the people be excited to acts of folly. During that last week, when His doom was already certain, He blazoned it forth, that all ages might know how the Son of God had dwelt among men.

Not one of the evangelists has failed to grasp the true significance of these last days. The records have long been subject to the closest scrutiny and, with the help that has been given us, it is possible to thread our way through the narrative, day by day, almost as if we were members of the company. This, however, does not mean that the same order is followed in the different gospels, or that they are always in agreement. It only means that, through comparison, a definite picture may be drawn of this world tragedy.

We left the company climbing the steep way that led from Jericho to Jerusalem. It was now Monday afternoon, and as they drew nigh to the outlying village of Bethany, Jesus decided to spend the night there in the house of His friends, Martha and Mary, whose brother Lazarus (an ancient legend declares) was raised from the dead. Now this story of Lazarus is found only in the fourth gospel, and is followed immediately by the statement that Jesus and His companions found shelter for that Monday night in the house of His friends. Only Luke, among the synoptics, mentions the incident of the visit and puts it at a much earlier date where it does not fit into our historical knowledge.

The company was large. Besides the twelve were

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doubtless other disciples and several women, among whom the name of His mother does not appear. The little suburban house must have been greatly overcrowded and Martha was in a flurry to do fitting honour to the Guest they loved. Mary, on the other hand, had seized the moment to gain enlightenment and understanding, while she sat, enrapt, at the Master's feet. These two names are for ever undying symbols of the irreconcilable natures with which we are endowed; and as long as human beings toil and aspire, the words of Jesus will retain their freshness and power of appeal: "Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful; for Mary hath chosen the good part which shall not be taken away from her."

If the order we are following is correct, it was on this Monday afternoon that Jesus made His triumphal visit to the city just below them. At any rate it is certain that His first approach to Jerusalem was an announcement of His Messianic errand. The episode, which from this distance seems a pitiable royal progress, left a deep mark upon the minds of the first Christian generation. It seemed like an outburst of the long-cherished hope that the Messiah would spring from David's loins. He was fulfilling an ancient prophecy in riding upon an ass's colt, and the group of twenty or thirty disciples who had cut some green straw in the fields (there were no palms in that country) heightened the prophetic effect by shouting a beautiful greeting, into which entered a line from the hundred and eighteenth Psalm:

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“Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord : Blessed is the Kingdom that cometh, the Kingdom of our father, David. Hosanna in the highest.”

Did these Galilean peasants have a moment of delirium when they saw in the humble figure of their King the restored throne of the great monarch and the twelve tribes once more united about the altar of the temple ? It was heroic, but no more heroic than if their pilgrim song was a challenge to the oppressors of their nation. Jesus takes an early opportunity to disclaim any royal kinship, but if these shouts had been heard by the Roman soldiers a cruel massacre must surely have followed. Matthew declares that all the city was stirred, and asked : “Who is this ?” “And the multitudes said : ‘This is the prophet, Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.’” We can imagine that if the Roman guards had caught up their weapons at the suspicion of rebellion, they quickly put them down again upon hearing this soft answer which would turn away any wrath. Jesus needed some better title than that if He wished to arouse the slightest curiosity from these Roman cynics.

It is far more likely that this little demonstration was a carefully planned method of drawing the attention of the Jews to His message. He had come down where the people were to announce in a large way the appearance of the Kingdom of Heaven ; and to proclaim to the whole nation that He was the Messiah sent from God. He said if the people were silent the stones would cry out to scatter the heavenly news. The disturbance must have quickly

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subsided, as it was bound to do when it became known Whom He was, for we only hear of a short visit to the temple and then an obscure return to the little hamlet among the olive trees and vineyards on the hill.

On the same evening there probably occurred the touching incident of anointing the Saviour's feet in the house of Simon, the leper. This story was held to be so important that it found a place in all four gospels, and its treatment is one of the puzzles of interpretation. It is found in its fullest and most beautiful form in Luke (vii. 36) where it is assigned to the early days of Jesus' ministry, and where Simon is simply referred to as a Pharisee. Matthew and Mark put it later in Holy Week, but both use the expression: "When He was in Bethany," and it is known He did not return there. John places the supper in the house of Martha and Mary on the Monday night, and represents Mary as the woman who anointed His feet, while the hated Judas protests against the waste.

We have, then, a composite picture of Simon, a Pharisee, who was possibly afflicted with leprosy and who lived in Bethany, giving a supper to Jesus on the one night He spent in the house of Martha and Mary. Into this feast came a woman, unknown to Simon, except as a "sinful woman," and, falling at the Saviour's feet, as He reclined at the table, bathed them with tears of penitence and love, poured costly ointment over them and then wiped them with her streaming hair. We must turn to Luke if we are seeking the haunting beauty of this



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scene. If the Pharisee was a leper it was a deeper shadow in the tragedy and a further expression of that pride of place which can override courtesy and law when dealing with the poor—for a leper's home was in the wilderness, crying: "Unclean, Unclean" to passers-by.

The Pharisee in Luke's version at once draws the inevitable conclusion about his Guest. If this man were really the prophet, he would instinctively feel the contamination of that sinful touch.

Then Jesus, divining his thought, becomes sublime. "Simon," He said—and every eye turned to Him in a breathless moment—"I have something to say unto thee." There is no anger nor resentment in that voice, but it vibrates with deep emotion. Quietly, penetratingly, He tells of a lender who had two debtors, one owing five hundred pence, the other fifty, and since neither had wherewith to pay, he forgave them both. Simon, which of the two will love him most? The one to whom he forgave most, was the obvious reply. "Thou hast answered rightly," said Jesus, and turning to the woman He throws over her the mantle of His protecting love: "Simon, seeth thou this woman? I entered into thine house; thou gavest me no water for mine feet: But she hath wetted my feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair. Thou gavest me no kiss: but she, since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but she hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much: but to whom little

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is forgiven, the same loveth little." And He said unto her, "Thy sins are forgiven." And they that sat at meat with Him began to say within themselves, "Who is this that even forgiveth sins?" And He said unto the woman, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

These are unforgettable words—the divine message of God's true Son. Through them we look beyond the occasion which called them forth into the heart of the human mystery. In them ten thousand times ten thousand hearts, to whom much has been forgiven, have found the sweet sense of forgiveness. They have coursed through sluggish veins like the strong wine of renewed life. There is no vapid sentimentality in this scene; but rather that terrible insistence upon reality that made Jesus appear an iconoclast to the conservators of old religious forms. Such love, born amidst sin and disgrace, can find lodgment only in a broken and contrite heart. Already the shadow of the Cross fell over that house of feasting. In the hush of that solemn moment the grave and tender words of Jesus sounded like a vesper bell. Against the cold light of Simon's indifference or neglect, the radiant sun of a newborn life filled the evening sky with glory. In the presence of the angels of God there was, we may well believe, great joy over this one sinner that repented.

We turn from that room, still fragrant with odours of the rich ointment poured forth against His burial, but the three commanding figures haunt us still. Life ever presented itself to our Lord as a conflict of contending forces—the lost sheep and the safe, the

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good servant and the bad ; the self-complacent worshipper and the heart-broken ; the nine ungrateful lepers and the one thankful Samaritan. It was the Poet's choice of material into which His teaching was cast. So now we leave Him between the stricken Pharisee and the more stricken woman --His mere presence making the inevitable judgment.

### TUESDAY

That night was passed in Bethany, cheered and comforted, we love to believe, by the sympathy and devotion of His friends.

In all that follows we must keep in mind that, in His own estimate of things, Jesus of Galilee has already passed into history. The Kingly Figure that holds our attention is the self-acknowledged Christ, the Son of God. He places Himself in the centre of His world ; His voice is commanding and authoritative. He challenges any power but His own. To the people of the city or who had come up for the feast, His presumption and arrogance were constant irritations. He was the carping critic of existing things, setting up standards of His own and belittling or condemning their pride. The rulers of the temple, shocked by His blasphemous assertions, sought to stay Him or to discredit Him in the eyes of the people, but His subtle skill only added to their discomfiture and hatred. The air was heavy with angry disputes and antagonisms. His judgment was harsh and stern, rising at times into violent passion. His raillery cut to the quick. There is no

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picture of an "anæmic Christ" in the records of these last days, but of an avenging Judge. The pastoral Poet, the gentle Guide, the understanding and helpful Friend disappears from the public eye, and the Champion of God rages furiously, with His back against the wall. The clouds and tempest and earthquake that swept over Calvary prefigured the agony of a Spirit released at last from tormenting strife.

Every event on this Tuesday added a sting to His perturbed soul. There is a strange story of His cursing a barren fig-tree on the road down to the Holy City, which must have filled a place of considerable importance in early tradition, but the meaning of which is lost to us. We come into clearer air when we follow Him into the spacious outer court of the temple. We have stepped out of the quiet of country lanes into a scene of immense bustle and activity. It is the time of preparation for the Passover, and Jews from the world over are gathering for the celebration. It is, especially, the great occasion for sacrifices, and it was needful that the elements of worship should be provided. The money offerings presented a difficulty. Those who came from afar, provided only with Roman gold, must needs change this into the unstamped copper coin that the law permitted to be offered in the temple. Then there were blood offerings of doves and goats and sheep, all of which must be near at hand for the convenience of the worshipper. The ceremony itself was complicated and ornate, requiring the use of many vessels and implements, so that

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there was much noise and confusion throughout the courts as the preparations proceeded. Even now we know enough about such scenes to realize the pitiful exhibition of human nature that confronted the Saviour in this hour of stress. He had thought He was coming into His Father's House to proclaim His divine message and to call the nation to repentance, and He found it more like a den of thieves. A storm of rage burst upon Him. Seizing a little cattle whip He swept through the court, driving men and beasts before Him, overturning the tables of the money changers and forcing back the bearers of the sacrificial vessels. As all fled before His wrath He was heard to repeat the beautiful passage in Isaiah (lvi. 7): "For mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people." In that moment of instinctive action, as we have seen again and again, He drew from that spiritual reserve He had laid up in earlier days. The vocabulary of the saints and prophets made His language. He was of their line. Not a jot nor a tittle of their revelation should pass away.

It was for their unbelief in their prophets that He condemned the ruling class. They boasted of their prophetic ancestry: He shows them that they neither knew nor heeded the prophets' teaching. Their eyes were blinded by pride. The witness of God, from generation to generation, was engulfed in their national egoism.

It is likely that in this outburst Jesus had the co-operation of certain disciples, but even that would hardly explain the dominating authority He held

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over the temple court throughout the day. Did something awe-inspiring and terrible shine out of His face and throw rulers and traders alike into consternation? This unimportant rustic from the north had passed through their sacred place like a whirlwind. He had outraged their feelings, hindered their trade, and interfered with their customs. Yet, for the moment, they were afraid, and the "multitude was astonished at His teaching."

Who was He? Jesus had Himself forced the great question upon Jerusalem. He had assumed, even to the rulers of the temple, that the temple was His peculiar charge. A little later He boasted that if they destroyed this temple, in three days He would raise it up again. Afterwards a commentator added that He referred to His resurrection. His hearers knew that He was speaking of a long-cherished dream of the Great Day of the Lord, when, in vision, the poet saw an eternal and holy city descending from heaven, wherein was the temple not made with hands, and over which the divine Messiah ruled. He claimed to be that Messiah. At His trial witnesses accused Him of uttering the blasphemy; He would build a temple not made with hands. He made Himself equal to God.

### WEDNESDAY

It was not on that day that the crisis came. Indeed, it is a matter of wonder that He held his place, unmolested by the Sanhedrin or the Roman guards whose garrison overlooked the temple court.

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In the evening He went quietly forth from the city and spent the night upon the Mount of Olives.

It was when He returned to His place the next morning that a deputation of priests, scribes, and elders confronted Him with the inevitable question : " By what authority doest thou these things ? "

This was a representative body of responsible citizens, and had a right to the answer they did not get. Instead, they were met with a haughty rejoinder that only added to their perplexity and confusion : " The baptism of John, was it from heaven or from men : answer me ? " Evidently no preparation had been made for such a counter-attack, and they shuffled and hesitated. At last they weakly surrendered. " We know not," they said ; and Jesus, with unconcealed contempt, brushes them aside with, " Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things."

It was a pitiful exhibition of cowardice. They had been sent to ask why Jesus had raised the tumult and obstructed the course of worship—not to debate about John. If they had not feared an arising of the people they would have answered that John was sent from God ; but did that prove that Jesus was also sent from God and could do what He would ?

In these last scenes there is always the one dominating Figure. His mastery is complete and He moves steadfastly towards His goal. The pretence of His enemies lies open to His mind and He scorns the paltriness of the deception. He clearly foresaw their ultimate triumph, but He believed that He



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must be lifted up, as was the serpent in the wilderness, for the salvation of mankind.

So He turns this solemn deputation back with something like a jest, but seizest the moment to impress the people with its real meaning. The passage, of such terrible beauty, in Isaiah, about the unfruitful vineyard flashes into His mind and He makes a picture. A man had carefully prepared a vineyard and had gone away into another country, leaving his husbandmen in charge. At harvest-time he had sent a servant to bring him the fruits of his labour, but the husbandmen had revolted. They beat the servant and sent him away empty. Another they wounded ; and still another they killed. At last the beloved son and heir was sent, in the belief that he would be received with the respect that was his due. But blood-lust triumphed over prudence, and him also they killed and cast the body out of the vineyard. Then comes the awful climax of the story. The lord of the vineyard will come as the avenger and destroy those husbandmen and give the vineyard to others.

In this striking parable Jesus gave the real answer to the scribes' demand. The Baptist had been rejected even as the earlier prophets had been. And now these husbandmen of God's vineyard are plotting violence against the beloved Son. Let them beware, for the stone rejected by the builders shall become the head of the corner. This warning fell upon deaf ears. In the conflict of wits, honours lay entirely with the simple Artisan from Nazareth, but the ingenuity of the scribes was far from ex-

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hausted. They were constrained by fear of the people on the one hand and the indifference of the Roman guards on the other. They dared not take Jesus by force openly, and they were well aware that they could bring no charge against Him that could justify a Roman sentence of death.

An ingenious plan suggested itself. They would send certain representatives of the Pharisees, who were the strictest upholders of the law, and of the Herodians, a party of Jewish patriots who longed to have the house of Herod restored, to ask the judgment of Jesus upon the most burning question of the hour. It was the question of taxation. At this time the empire was supported almost wholly by the tax imposed upon conquered provinces ; and since 6 A.D., Judea had been subject to this humiliating law. Thus the people of God must support a heathen master. Here was a cleverly planned dilemma, and upon one of its horns Jesus must be caught. He had to choose between giving mortal offence to the people and braving the sure vengeance of Rome.

They came to Him with honeyed words, but these were only to set the trap : " Is it lawful to give tribute unto Cæsar, or not ? " The colours and lines of this picture are as brilliant and clear as when Mark first painted it—the evident cunning and treachery of the Jewish rabbis, the expectant crowd, the perplexed and troubled disciples, and, in the centre of the throng, the scornful and indignant Victim of this conspiracy. Once again His words burn the printed page. He exposes the hypocrisy and snaps out the command : " Bring me a penny."

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Now this coin, a denarius, was of Roman mintage and bore an image of the Emperor. It was against the Jewish law for any citizen—and most of all a Pharisee—to carry about in any form, the image of a living person. There was conviction of their infidelity in Jesus' sharp question: "Whose is this image and superscription?" To that question there could be but one answer, yet there was the chance that Jesus would use it to call upon them to rise and throw off the hated yoke. But His words shoot out like a sword thrust: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and unto God the things that are God's." This was a most noble reply. It disarmed His enemies and lifted the whole question into His own region of thought. It mattered little that the heathen should have his own, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. But repent and cleanse your hearts of malice, hypocrisy, and hate, that you may give them back to God, pure and undefiled.

Yet these appealing words were spoken in vain. They might as well have been addressed in a foreign tongue, for they left Jesus more than ever a stranger in that heated atmosphere. The minds of His foes were already preoccupied with the prejudices and passions of their order, which left no crack nor crevice where Christ's spiritual message could lodge. Nor is it a simple matter for any later generation to grasp this unworldly teaching. As social beings we are bound just where Jesus was completely free. There were no conflicting loyalties clamouring for regency in His soul. No ties of family, party, church,

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or state held Him fast. His whole being was within the Kingdom of God. And in the first romantic days of the Christian faith His disciples shared the secret of His power. They, too, were lifted above the torture of inward conflict. They were free from the tyranny of the world and of vain desire. Nothing stood between them and their soul's passionate longing. Their human love was an armour that blunted the sharpest weapon of their persecutors. They lived among men with blessings on their lips and died with songs of triumph.

This is plain history and no student can pass it by.

We can but wonder at the resourcefulness of Jesus' enemies. He had sent out a mighty challenge and it was answered on every side. The next deputation brought Him back to the Mosaic law and His unfamiliar interpretation of it.

St Mark, swiftly moving, passes to the next incident with the simple phrase: "And there came unto Him Sadducees." This sect of the Jews fill no large place in the story. They were frank materialists, upholders of royalty and distinguished by the tenet that there could be no resurrection from the dead. They chose to present their problem in a grotesque form. The ancient law provided for a childless widow by declaring that she must be taken as wife by a brother of her dead husband. The absurd question assumes a woman married in turn to seven brothers and dying childless. Whose wife does she become in Heaven?

Jesus again lifts the question into His own pure atmosphere. Marriage is an earthly ordinance, but

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in Heaven man is as the angels. He does not draw from any of the great texts upon immortality, but rather obscurely, to us, shows how the God of the patriarchs is the God of the living and not of the dead. Written documents may become dead, but the testimony of the living is to the vitality of life. Christ did not dwell upon heaven, but turned the thought to the nature of man—to his moral integrity, to his sense of incompleteness, to his unfinished tasks, to his undying love.

The God of the living will not mock the divinest instincts He has implanted in living souls. "You, Sadducees," He seemed to say, "would add a deeper gloom to man's unrealized longing for completeness. You would make noble life the desperate and hopeless heroism of a warrior in a lost cause. You would rob him of the faith that cheers his solitary heart in the blackest hours of loneliness. You do greatly err."

The last hours of Jesus' life were tortured by the ignoble and malicious spirit of His adversaries, which jars painfully upon our sensibilities in these far distant days. He was not permitted to finish His task, even unto death, in the sustaining atmosphere of a great occasion. These spiteful and belittling attacks stand in pitiful contrast to the majesty of the event.

But now there appeared a scribe whose questions seem to have been animated by a pure desire to understand the new doctrine. Neither Matthew nor Luke believe in the sincerity of this man, who wanted to know which was the great commandment, but

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Jesus accepts the question at its face value and answers with the beautiful passage in Deuteronomy (vi. 4) beginning, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one God." Probably the scribe carried these very words in the little cases, or phylacteries, that he wore strapped across his forehead and upon his left arm. Every day he repeated them at morning and evening prayer. So that in this essential duty of all mankind there was complete agreement. There was written in Leviticus (xix. 18) another law of equal authority but not of equal observance. It read: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In Matthew's record Jesus linked these two commandments together by the phrase "and the second is like unto it," and in that phrase He drew away somewhat from the teaching of the schools. Here, once more, the question of observances and ceremonials intruded itself, and we have seen how far He had drifted from the fixed standard of the Jews. We see again His passionate insistence upon reality. There are not two loves, but one; and the spirit that soars upward towards God, flows through healing channels among God's children. The scribe was impressed and assured Jesus He had spoken well. This man had evidently fed upon the strong food of the inspired prophets, and Jesus tells him that he is not far from the Kingdom of God.

At this point the narrative in St Mark comes to an abrupt stop, but in the later record of St Luke the lawyer, "desiring to justify himself," asks the further pregnant question: "And who is my neighbour?" It was in answer to that question

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that Jesus told the immortal story of the Good Samaritan. To us it has lost its freshness, and it is only by an effort of imagination that we can share the startled wonder of the first hearers.

Even the sympathetic scribe must have felt the shock of so unexpected a reply. He must have listened to hear some words about God's chosen people and about their mission to hold aloft the standard of the pure faith. He might well have anticipated a dissertation upon their duties to family, nation, and race. Certainly the one reply he did not expect, was to hear the despised Samaritan exalted at the expense of the most respectable and patriotic members of Jewish society. The long climb from Jericho to Jerusalem of a few days before must have impressed itself upon Jesus' mind. About that gruesome road He built up his picture; the unfortunate victim of the highwaymen, the unmerciful priest and Levite, who left the victim to his fate; and the kindly, generous Samaritan who saved and provided for him—all these are painted from life. The question and answer were inevitable. The neighbour was he who showed mercy upon him. Then Jesus' eye kindles. His voice hardens with a note of command. Pointing His finger at the lawyer, He dismisses him with words that sound like a pistol shot: "Go, and do thou likewise."

After this day of tumult Jesus returns to the Mount of Olives and to communion with His Father.



# The Last Phase

## MAUNDY THURSDAY

At this point in the narrative of St Mark (xii. 34) there is a gap, as though a bit of the manuscript had been torn away and lost. In the next verse Jesus is again in the temple court, renewing the controversies of the day before. On this Thursday morning His enemies must have felt that they had plotted in vain. He had dominated the situation, repelled their attacks, escaped from their intrigues ; yet had not come into collision with the Roman authorities.

Instead of being discredited in the eyes of the people He had, by the courage and wisdom of His replies, shown Himself to be a Master in Israel. His moral ascendancy held every point but one ; and that the fatal one. He had not convinced nor disarmed His foes. He still held the court of the temple, but it was evident that before the evening of the next day, when the Feast of the Passover began, He must be dislodged and accused before the tribunal as a criminal offender. The priests were well aware that such an outrage could not be perpetrated in the temple without causing a riot. It must be done, if at all, when He was comparatively unguarded at night. It was a sign of the blindness of hate that His enemies could not ascribe to Jesus, even now, the simple intelligence to recognize so obvious a fact.

We have reached the point where the sinister figure of Judas Iscariot looms large in the story. This singular man has been an important personage in the history and literature of all Christendom. His

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name has aroused the most malignant passions and justified the most cruel deeds. He has been the one black figure in every mystery play and in every work of religious art. He has been execrated as the betrayer of God and as the incarnation of the power of Evil. Countless of his fellow-countrymen have been tortured and massacred, and a whole wonderful race been despised and isolated, to revenge his dastardly act. There is no parallel in history of such fiendish treatment of man by man as that of the followers of Jesus towards the Jews.

In later years a reaction of feeling, or perversity of judgment, has sought to rehabilitate the man and to find justifiable reasons for his wanton deed. In particular, he has been painted as an ardent patriot, believing with fanatical faith that Jesus was the Messianic redeemer of His race; that only by the death of the Messiah would He return in power and glory; and that events were moving far too slowly for the realization of his hopes. He is thus shown as a helper in the divine plan; as the victim of a mad love, but not as the instigator of treachery.

It is a great lesson in historical interpretation. The truth is that we have little knowledge upon which to build a sane judgment. Our two oldest sources are St Mark (xiv. 10) and St Paul (1 Cor. xi. 23), and both of these speak of the act as a betrayal. Long afterwards the gospel of St John dwells upon his avaricious nature and reveals the fact that he carried the common purse. Matthew also accuses him of betrayal for thirty pieces of silver, and even Mark speaks of a promise of money.

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Nevertheless, to the modern reader, this does not explain an inexplicable act; though it does reveal the feeling of the early Christian community towards Judas. The modern reader cannot forget what went before and after the infamous deed. It is hard to believe that any lover of ease or comfort or gain should have joined the apostolic band. Like the rest, Judas had lived hard and, sometimes, dangerously. He had become a homeless wanderer, sharing the uncertainty and privation of the memorable flight into heathen territory. He was one of the messengers of the Kingdom of God who were sent out into the villages of Galilee. He had taken part in the exultant entry into Jerusalem and had become a marked man by his association with Jesus during the last few days in the temple.

It is possible, as has been suggested, that at this point his loyalty broke down. The question of the Messiahship was never clearly demonstrated. We do not know how far this belief was shared by the disciples, except by Peter and the sons of Zebedee. Moreover, the Master whom he loved in Galilee was a different person in Jerusalem. In the Holy City all was tumult, disputation, and defiant challenges. That Jesus was provoking His own death was evident, and He had more than hinted that others might suffer with Him. Even Peter was guilty of the "great refusal" in the hour of danger, and it is possible, though by no means certain, that Judas was driven to an insane act by fear of his own and his companions' conviction and death. If that is so, the wave of insanity quickly passed. Repentance

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followed fast and the punishment was swift and terrible.

Of course those who see in these human figures only puppets moved hither and thither according to a long-matured and divine scheme of things have no difficulties with the historical setting of the drama. But there is one clear and accusing truth that cannot be too often repeated. It is that the treatment of this historical Judas, and his race, by the Church of Christ is the most flagrant betrayal of the Master's teaching and a most treacherous act of disloyalty to His dear name.

While Judas was making his first visit to the rulers, Jesus still held his place in the centre of the surging throng within the temple court. Apparently the scribes had been explaining to the people that the true Messiah would be of royal birth. "There shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse," Isaiah had promised. Now Jesus was a Galilean artisan, and the story of His birth in Bethlehem, the city of David, was not yet known. Jesus, in reply, shows the absurdity—to a Jewish mind—of a father addressing his son as Lord. "The Lord said unto my Lord." He makes no claim of royal blood, nor of southern birth, but He does seek to disassociate the idea of Messiahship and the Kingdom of God from the limitations of a political restoration. The strain of royal blood would have been thin, indeed, after nine hundred tumultuous years, but the important fact was that this illusion of being God's favoured people, hardened the hearts of the Jews against the divine message. The Kingdom of God

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He proclaimed, was an evangel of grace and love to all peoples, and this announcement was a bitter blow to the national pride and hope of Jewish patriots.

Yet in spite of what He was and what He said of Himself, history, theology, and art have clung to the figure of an earthly King. He lived upon earth as a working-man, in an obscure little village far removed from the seats of power and splendour. As a King, He was indeed a sorry figure. As the Son of God, He was Lord of Lords over the spiritual universe.

It is all very strange. The familiar facts count for little. The whole world has conspired to crown and robe and adorn Him as an Eastern potentate. Even His own scornful words cannot dissipate the glamour of royalty, and we worship in the language of servility and in the barbaric images of the Apocalypse. He asked only to be obeyed. He longed to be loved. By His own words He is not an earthly king. By His own words He is the way, the truth, and the life.

Thus far, on this unhappy day, Jesus had remained in the temple court receiving and parrying the attacks of His enemies. Again and again He had thrown them back, until their weapons of attack were harmless ; but their hearts were filled with deadly hatred. Now He suddenly shifts the positions. He no longer receives their blows but strikes out at His persecutors. We can see His anger rise and swell, His burning face and flashing eyes. His words pour out in floods over the broken dam of His self-restraint. There is no peace now ; but bitter and exterminating war. Mark condenses the report of this scene, but

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Matthew, drawing upon the earlier document of sayings, makes a tremendously dramatic picture.

The opening words are calm and just. The scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, and their official position gives weight to their words, but—His anger rising—"do not ye after their works : for they say and do not." He adds to the general condemnation some details of their evil qualities—their pride, vanity, avarice, and hypocrisy. They use their high position to deceive their fellows, to devour widows' houses, to adorn their persons, and to win flattery from man. Then follows that magnificent outburst of righteous wrath—denunciation heaped upon denunciation, mountain high ; a long wail of woe over the infidelity of these blind leaders of the blind—these hypocrites who "shut the Kingdom of Heaven against men." His words reach an ecstasy of vituperation : "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Hell ? "

This terrible scene took place during the day on the evening of which was instituted the Supper of the Lord. The fury of the attack swept all scribes and Pharisees into a general condemnation. Yet among them there must have been more than one Nicodemus, men of just and earnest minds and of reverential spirits. How could such have heard these frenzied, scathing rebukes without a feeling of outrage—wrath answering unto wrath ?

It was a great judgment pronounced in a great way. The long pent-up feelings towards vested wrongs against God and man, of power given and misused, of a mighty faith polluted to serve the



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vilest personal interests, professing intimate association with God—these and many like iniquities fell under the reproach of this divine storm, which even now rolls in thunder and flashes in lightning through the printed words. More than once Jesus has been pictured as the feeble, unresisting victim of His own folly. Renan calls Him the “Ineffectual Nazarene”—Him, the lonely Champion of God’s truth, whose vibrant voice comes forth from the overhanging shadow of the Cross with defiance and challenge. In such moments we feel not only the steadfastness of the Son of God, but the wholeness or integrity of the human man.

The outburst closes, in St Matthew’s report, with these inexplicable words: “Verily I say unto you, all these things shall come upon this generation.”

In this tragic scene the rigid and unbending framework of His nature is laid bare. He is now battling against the powers of darkness, no longer in that serene and joyous mood which gives so great a charm to the Galilean ministry. In those pastoral days He made a lasting impression of a divine understanding of the drama we call human life. Nor was His insight more divine than His longing to bless and heal the suffering children of men. To a special degree He was drawn to the outcast, the forsaken, the weak, and the sinful, as though it was the mind of God that those who had been stripped of the satisfactions of earthly life should flower and bear fruit once more in their souls. And it is doubtless because of this sympathy and compassion towards the needy that Jesus has left an image upon the eye



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of history of a certain softness of nature, of passive and obedient suffering in fulfilment of a divine plan, of a willing Victim laid upon the altar to appease the just wrath of God.

“O Lamb of God, still keep me close to Thy wounded side.”

The Church has passed through phases or moods of trembling fear as it has grasped the terrible significance of human sin ; and through phases of weak sentimentality over the generally benevolent and wholly ineffective picture of Christ. The van Eyck brothers' “The Adoration of the Lamb,” and those many revolting pictures of the betrothal of St Catherine to the infant Jesus are types of these two moods. But neither the one nor the other has any meaning in modern life. The issue is being more and more forced upon us, as the fear of other days subsides and the sentiment grows cold. The world of to-day may be falling into the ditch because of the blind leaders of the blind.

Christ is still an authority and a sentiment. The habits, teachings, and inheritances linger on, or re-establish themselves in other forms, as paganism lives on in the customs and festivals of the Christian Church.

But has Christianity any enlightenment to illumine the obscure path we travel ? Can Christ give a clear interpretation of the confused strivings of the hour ? He no longer is here to work wonders, to teach and heal and console. But we have a vivid picture of Him, entrapped within the the toils of

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another civilization, on the last full day of His life. If that picture is true—if the report of His sayings is accurate—we may well look long upon it. We will stand in the midst of a terrific spiritual cyclone. The props and walls of the established religion are rent asunder; the foundations are upheaved, the towers and pinnacles crash. The rules of guidance, the customs of worship, the dignities of society, the reverences of daily life are all brought under Christ's searching criticism. And for what end? That men might find the way of life and walk in it—the way of truth and disinterested love and worship.

It is at the close of this outcry of a tortured soul that Mark introduces the incident of the widow's mite by way of illustration. We are to place ourselves within the court of the temple, where the crowd surged around Jesus, thunderstruck and shocked by His violence. Perhaps He had turned away from them, and His quick eye caught the pitiful figure of a poor widow slinking up to the funnel-shaped openings in the wall which carried the offerings of the faithful into the chests behind. She had come to the sacred feast to make her offering of faith and love. That is what Jesus saw. The coin itself could hardly have been visible, but He makes the contrast that the lesson demands. Her two mites showed that she ventured all for God. Others gave out of their superfluity. She gave her next meal, her night's lodging, her comfort, and her safety. This was His constantly repeated teaching; God is not bribed nor His favour won by offerings. He asks for all and gives life to those who lose it.

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He was leaving the temple, then, with His mind filled with the terrible thought of God's judgment, when one of His disciples called His attention to the vast structure of the temple. It was indeed an impressive sight to see the massive stones of the substructure heaped high one above the other, and Jesus looked at it with a master-builder's eye. Nevertheless it brought Him no joy. This, even this, was not the enduring thing. It, too, must meet the common fate of all the works of man. Only the Kingdom of God could endure from age to age, and a time would come when of all the strength and splendours of the temple not one stone should be left upon another.

With these words the Lord goes forth from the temple, having left a profound and startling impression upon His hearers. He had got as far as the Mount of Olives and was sitting there when four of the disciples came to ask Him when these things should be and what would be the signs of the coming. He begins with a warning to the disciples lest they might be led astray and then, adopting the ideas of the age, He pictures, in fearful symbols, the approach of the awful cataclysm. Wars and rumours of war, nations and kingdoms rising against their neighbours, famines and earthquakes, hatred for themselves and persecution and tribulation, and the sun more and more darkened, the stars falling and the earth quaking. Then shall the Son of Man appear with clouds of cohorts in power and great glory (Mark xiii.).

In all that weird and vivid picture of the end of

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things, Jesus reflected the common thought of the time upon the last days. The Jewish apocalyptic literature had made it familiar to all (Daniel vii. 13). But there was ever present in Jesus' mind a conviction that this mighty overthrow of earthly principalities and powers would be brought about in that generation (Mark xiii. 30), even though He is reported in this discourse to have said that the "Gospel must first be preached unto all nations." And then this thought of the Second Coming was never left in the realm of idealism. It was a warning to be prepared, it was a vision into the enduring realities. It is as though a master had gone away leaving his house in the care of his servants, having commanded the porter to watch against his coming. "Watch, therefore, for ye know not what day your Lord cometh."

In this question of time there is the same apparent contradiction in the different versions that we have noted elsewhere. In part it shows the independent sources of the gospels, as written at different dates, with different aims and in different moods. But there are certain signs that statements or discourses are put into Jesus' mouth. He would hardly have said at nearly the same time that His own generation should not pass away until the Kingdom came, and that the gospel must be first preached to all nations. The latter statement certainly did not impress the first disciples, and it was years later when Paul discovered the wider mission of the new faith and became the great evangelist to the Gentile world. It is odd how

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quickly the apostolic mind slowed down after the personal inspiration was taken away.

## THE LAST SUPPER

It was at the close of this day of tumult, when the air was filled with strife and hatred, and men were dividing into groups of embittered partisans, that the most tender and loving rite of the new fellowship in Christ Jesus was instituted. It was the last of the many times they had met at their simple meal, and it would seem from John (vi. 32) that Jesus had before used the figure of His being the true bread that cometh down out of Heaven.

How important this Last Supper was held to be among the first followers of Jesus is shown by the substantial agreement of the story in the three synoptic gospels and by the recital of it in Paul's 1 Corinthians xi. 23-25, which he claimed to have "received from the Lord." John alone omits the rite, while giving four long chapters of discourses attributed to Jesus on that eve.

The little company had gathered in an upper room and were reclining about a common dish into which they dipped bits of bread when Jesus was made aware of the sinister purpose of Judas. There followed a painful interlude when Jesus revealed the knowledge of what was passing in the mind of the traitor. It was written that He should die, He said, and yet, even in the fulfilment of destiny, "woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed ; it would have been better if that man had never been

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born." These words read like a decree of fate and must have sounded like such in the ears of Judas, who immediately went out and revealed to the Pharisees the whereabouts of his Master. The company was disturbed: a note of agitation sounds in all the narratives, and most of all Jesus was deeply affected. He knew now that the great moment was at hand. He seems to have become distrustful of all the disciples, predicting that even Peter will deny Him. He felt that He was suddenly left alone; and in a few moments He was to pass through the most terrible agony of His life. There was no faltering upon the path, but that frightful physical shrinking from anticipated pain that shows how truly human was the body in which His spirit dwelt. Once, in a moment of glad exultation, He cried out: "I am not alone because the Father is with me," but we are to see that even this confidence in His Father's presence is to be shaken. Without this knowledge of Jesus' despair our precious inheritance would be partly lost.

The words of institution in the different narratives are not quite the same, indicating that the form of the sacrament was not yet fixed. Paul, who may have heard the story from Peter during a memorable visit, does not speak of handing the bread about. Mark omits the words "which is broken for you," as well as the phrase "this do in remembrance of me." Luke, in general, follows the version of Paul, but retains the expression of Mark, "This is the blood of my covenant that is poured out for many." This seems to point to a first act of liba-



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tion when a little of the wine, poured upon the floor, symbolized the shedding of the sacrificial blood. After this act the cup was passed round the table.

Whatever the feeling of the disciples, this was for Jesus a profoundly touching moment. It was the farewell to an intimacy that had grown closer and deeper as they advanced further into the shadow of the Cross. We cannot penetrate His mind beyond the words He uttered, but the discourses attributed by St John are the incomparable expressions of religious hope and consolation.

It would seem that He still cherished the expectation of a quick return to establish the new Kingdom. He will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until He drinks it in the Kingdom of God. His thought was clearly that of a material state of society and not of a spiritual crisis. But until His return His followers are to remember these last hours and to repeat the little, loving ceremony at their daily meals. By His death He would establish the new covenant when divine love and forgiveness should drive sin out of the world.

In the earliest days all this healing sentiment found full play. But this was not the line of development the later Church followed. It grew more and more a shadowy mystery through which holy hands worked the ineffable wonder. It became the fulfilment of the Passover drama, though it was actually eaten the day before. It reverted to more naturalistic meanings and became the eating of divine flesh and blood. It became a barrier of division between followers of the same Master. It incited



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them to deeds of cruelty and bloodshed. It was the war-cry of fanatical hatred. Yet the simple scene has not faded away, and again men's souls yearn to sit with the loving Master and eat the bread and drink the wine He has blessed.

But its deeper and more sacred meaning is shown by the words of Jesus. Death now appeared to Him as the final act in the mission upon which God had sent Him. It was the door into the new covenant, the living symbol of divine forgiveness of sin : of the unity of the Church through constant communion with its Head and of brotherly love by intimate and holy association.

### MOUNT OF OLIVES

The act of Judas had shown Jesus the untrustworthiness of human support. His mind was centred upon His impending fate, which He now knew He must meet alone. On the road He opens the subject as though He were musing upon an old prophecy (Zechariah xiii. 7). It is a touching scene. He clings to His conviction that God has not misled Him and that His death will be only a momentary act at the ushering in of the Kingdom. After He has accomplished His part and has been raised from the tomb He will go into Galilee and will there meet them. Peter protests loudly, fervently, his loyalty and steadfastness ; and so, too, do the others as they gather close to their Master. But He knew better than they the weakness of human strength. It was not that upon which he was to

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rely. He knew it and they must learn it. His voice seems to break with love and pity as He cries : " Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath asked that he may sift thee as wheat is sifted ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith may not fail, and when thou hast returned to thyself strengthen thou thy brethren." Peter still protests, and then Jesus makes the solemn pronouncement of his denial : " Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."

We see how Jesus looked through sin and weakness into the pure intent—not blinking the facts, nor mastered by them. He suffered no illusions, but saw more than what His eyes rested upon. He saw the reaction, the return to loyalty and truth, the triumph of the soul after defeat, but He did not seek to cover the actual offence.

He shows them that they are to meet a different world now than when He sent first them out upon a mission. Then they set forth into a world of welcome and needed nothing for their journey. An enthusiastic greeting awaited them from those who were looking for the Kingdom of God. Now there would be no welcome ; but war. Let them take purse and wallet and sword to meet the enmity of an unfriendly world.

With this sad discourse they move towards the spot where they had spent the preceding night. It was called " Gethsemane " (" the oil press "), and lies at the foot of the Mount of Olives across the brook Kidron. The spot is still pointed out. In going there Jesus of course knew that He was to meet His fate. He could easily have escaped but

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such a thought could not be entertained. His death was the will of God and towards this moment He had steadily moved since He set His feet to go to Jerusalem.

And now comes the most terrible scene in all the life of Jesus—terrible, not because it produced a crisis of an uncertain issue, but because of the awful agony which seized upon His soul. He had left the eight disciples on guard and, taking with Him Peter and James and John had gone further into the garden; and then the blow fell. Suddenly He “began to be greatly amazed and sore troubled,” and, turning to the three, He opened His heart to them. “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death.” He begs them not to leave Him but to keep watch. Then, driven by inward tumult He rushes on and falls prostrate crying out in agony that if it were possible the hour might pass away from Him. And lifting up His soul, as though with a stupendous effort of resignation and trust, He pleads: “Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; remove this cup from me; howbeit not what I will, but what thou wilt.” We do not know how these words of prayer have come to us, since the disciples were avowedly asleep, but they were repeated thrice in the mighty struggle of His spirit, and Peter must have heard them and reported them to Mark. What else He prayed, through what other agonies He passed, we can only conjecture. These disciples were not far away, yet one feels the immense solitude, the awful loneliness, in which the soul of Jesus fought the powers of darkness. Perhaps it was Peter too

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who, in after years, told the story, so that against the shining light of Christ's immortal battle was placed the black shadow of the disciples' faithlessness. Overcome with weariness they slept at their post, with no word of sympathy or cheer for their heroic Master. No one but Peter could have told the story, the Peter of the contrite heart. The shame is his and not his companions. "Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest thou not watch one hour? Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." So Peter, the man of many promises and protests of devotion, long afterwards recalled the scene, amazed and overwhelmed at his weakness.

In that same mood the disciples of Christ, in every generation since, have looked back upon the agony of Gethsemane. The passion of Jesus in that crisis had little to do with death taken by itself. He had long foreseen the inevitable end of the road He was taking and had adjusted His mind to it. Moreover, He was fully assured that the way to glory lay through the gate of death. Certainly He had no less courage and calm than Socrates or any other martyr to truth who had faced death with serenity. Nor was it only the betrayal of Judas, nor the inconstancy of His disciples, nor the blind hatred of His race that wrung His soul. Something greater than all these was present to His mind, of which we have only hints and suggestions. The burden of a sin-weighted world bore heavily upon Him—the titanic struggle of principalities and powers waged within Him. He came to bring life and light and joy to mankind.

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He met the powers of darkness and destruction in mortal combat. He was passing through a chamber of horrors, and it is truly said that He descended into Hell.

It was after His third return to the sleeping disciples that His quick ear caught the sound of the multitude who, with swords and staves, had come from the chief priests to seize Him. The large number of these emissaries of the Sanhedrin suggests that the leaders expected a strong resistance ; or perhaps the few sent out had collected a rabble on the way. The authorities of the temple really possessed no police force other than an untrained body of Levites, whose commander was called the "Captain of the Temple." This particular body seems to have had no leader except the traitor Judas. It was part of the prearrangement that this man should designate the culprit by a kiss :—"And when he was come, straightway he came to him, and saith, 'Rabbi,' and kissed him."

It seemed necessary that the death of the Son of God should be associated with the foulest human crimes. It was the supreme mockery of His fate that the reward of His unwearying service and of His divine sacrifice should be met with hatred, treachery, hypocrisy, and cowardice from friends as well as foes. But little mattered now. Jesus had met the tempter and won the victory. He suffered the arrest to be made, merely remarking upon the folly of all this elaborate precaution when He could have been taken any day in the temple.

As for the disciples, they seem to have been

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seized with terror. Someone who stood by struck off a servant's ear, but, after this slight outburst of resistance, all those whom He had guided, loved, and protected, deserted Him and fled. In the general panic Mark even mentions one youth who left his single garment in the clutches of the officers and rushed away naked.

Only Jesus, who but a few moments before, had suffered intolerable agonies of spirit, now resumes His kingly state. It was a strange procession that entered the house of the high priest. All this treachery and secrecy and marshalling of force to seize One who had no single friend in His hour of need, but whose proud silence and regal bearing must have dwarfed all the company. Dramatically, all the elements of a great scene are present ; the calm, towering figure of the divine Victim dominating the whole situation, the peculiarly loathsome hypocrisy of the traitor, the helpless and panic-stricken disciples, and the crowd of undisciplined servants of the Sanhedrin. Judas had betrayed his Master with a kiss. The band immediately seized Jesus and led Him away to the house of the high priest. The gospel of St John alone mentions a first interview with the all-powerful Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the nominal high priest, and gives a graphic picture of the scene. The great leader questions the Prisoner about His doctrine and His followers, and is met with the haughty reply that as His teaching was always in public places and before crowds of the people it was perfectly well known what He taught. And then, as though

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speaking with kingly authority, He says, "Why asketh thou me? Ask them that have heard me, what I spake unto them; behold, these know the things which I said." To the guards this audacious outburst from a humble peasant in reply to the question of the powerful ecclesiastic was an impertinence, and one of the officers struck Jesus, and exclaimed, "Answerest thou the high priest so?"

We are thankful to John for that picture. It adds something to the earlier accounts. It was not by this arrogant usurper of power that Jesus would be tried but by the legally constituted authority. Annas was forced to recognize this fact, and he sent Jesus bound before the Sanhedrin.

Here the real trial began, if such a procedure might be called a trial. The judgment was already made, but there were forms of law that must be observed and the approaching feast called for quick action. It was now well on in the night, and the next evening the Passover would be eaten. Moreover, the preaching of Jesus had deeply moved the people and an uprising in that turbulent city was always to be feared.

The real offence of Jesus was that He opposed to the system of Jewish formalism—the ritual, the sacrifices, the observance of days and customs—a religion of the heart. In His acts and teachings He had been guilty of grave improprieties, but it was a more difficult matter to collect evidence of any act, or statement, that would bring Him under the condemnation of death. The highly placed Jew in the Sanhedrin had no qualms about delivering



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one of their own race over to the secular arm of their hated conquerors, but they must have legal ground for asking the Romans to pronounce the sentence of death, which was not within their own power. They dared not charge Him with desecrating the temple when, a few days before, He had driven the traders and money changers out of the court, because the Roman authorities and the populace evidently approved of this cleansing. The words He had uttered about destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days were certainly blasphemous to the Jewish officials. Jeremiah (vii. 1-15; xxvi. 1-24) had been tried for his life because he predicted the destruction of the temple of his day, which, he said, had become a den of thieves. But the difficulty was to find the two necessary witnesses at that time of night who would agree upon what words Jesus actually used. "Many bore false witness against Him, and their witness agreed not together." Jesus had maintained a tantalizing silence through all this procedure. At last the high priest stood up before Him, and in words which still ring with exasperation, demanded: "Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?" But Jesus remained unmoved. Again, with anger and contempt, the high priest uttered the fatal words: "Art thou the Messiah, the son of the Most Blessed?" He had permitted the words to pass his lips, and Jesus was not slow to accept the challenge. Powerless, insignificant, and contemptible as He seemed, His pretension was the most royal. "I am," was His Kingly answer, "and ye shall see the Son of Man

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sitting at the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Even now the great confession bursts upon us with startling power. It seems as though all of Jesus' ministry had led to this sublime moment. We have followed Him over the path of His wandering mission. By His own statement He had not a place whereon to lay His head. His was not a royal figure—this Friend of the poor; this Companion of publicans and sinners. All records agree that He was endowed with some extraordinary power; that His heart was pitiful towards the afflicted, and that His words reached the secret places of the soul. But in all He said and did there was no public claim to such a preposterous position. This calm and silent Peasant claimed for Himself the central place in history. He lifted Himself above patriarchs, prophets, and lawgivers—above customs and law itself, above governors, kings, and emperors, above time and space. The shuddering Jews cried out that this blasphemer made Himself equal to God. Little wonder that the high priest rent his clothes and that they all condemned Him as worthy of death. Yet Jesus was no fanatic, no self-intoxicated egoist. All the world has paid tribute to His gentle and fearless dignity in this terrible hour. He was possessed of God and in that intimate union of wills felt Himself to be the Son of God. Afterwards, when His disciples tried to put this unknowable thing into a form of words, to grasp it and make it intelligible to their understanding, they lost somewhat of its inner meaning. Every definition cuts off something, as the word implies, and as it grows

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more intricate and difficult the soul of reality passes out of it. What Jesus meant when He called Himself the Son of God has been known to His followers through flashes of spiritual insight—the sense of limitless power, the harmony of soul with all created things, the consciousness of a divine mission and destiny, the flooding love for God's children and more especially for those who most need their Heavenly Father's care; the pain which cannot be assuaged over sin and suffering for sin—these divine motions men have felt, and, looking up from the stricken earth, have seen Christ in His glory.

It is no fable, no innocent dream, but the supreme reality of life for those who have climbed the mountain for the lost sheep, or swept the room diligently for the lost coin, or welcomed the prodigal with a father's love. "Others may reason and welcome," but these know. Christ was fully the divine Son of God, for what He was God must be.

This was what the leaders of Jewish life did not and could not know. With a true instinct they saw that He was their deadly foe. His virtues made Him the more dangerous, and His blasphemous claims justified their condemnation. Their course was clear. It was to hurry Him before Pilate, the Roman procurator, and demand an immediate sentence of death.

## THE MOCKING

But while this drama was being enacted on a large scale in the council chamber, without, in the

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court, a lesser but still poignant drama was being played. Peter, probably with a rabble of idle and curious persons, had found his way inside the gate and sat with others in the early morning warming himself by a charcoal fire. It was characteristic of Peter to find himself in such a place, led by an inward prompting, yet unprepared for action. To the others the scene that was taking place within excited curiosity or ribaldry. Peter's bearing must have shown his anxiety and fear, so that when a maid of the high priest's household came out, perhaps to report what was taking place within, her eye lit upon him, and she exclaimed: "Thou also wast with the Nazarene, even Jesus." Peter had invited such suspicion but was unprepared for it, and his first impulse was to deny the accusation. He therefore left the group about the fire and went out on the porch leading from the courtyard to the street. It was here that he heard the first cock crow. But the maid was not easily repulsed and insisted to those about that Peter was one of the disciples. Others called attention to his unmistakable Galilean appearance and accent. Then Peter quite lost his head and "began to curse and to swear, I know not this man of whom ye speak." At that very moment, the story runs, the cock crew again, and Peter, shocked back to his normal self, went out and wept bitterly. It is a touching and human incident, true to the impetuous and heedless Peter who has been portrayed, and it adds one more infamy to the black list which gathered about the Saviour's last hours.

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Jesus, condemned, beaten, and mocked, was now conducted right across the city to the governor's palace which stood against the western wall near the Jaffa gate. Jesus had provided His foes with the accusation that would most appeal to a Roman ruler. Without doubt the Jews believed that when the Messiah came He would be their King, and Jesus claimed to be the Messiah. He had declared that His return in kingly power and state would be almost immediate, and the Jewish leaders knew that Pilate's tenure of office was too precarious for him to ignore so grave a menace.

The trial before Pilate took place in the early morning, upon a raised platform or pavement in front of the palace, called Gabbatha. The accounts grow richer in detail as they get further away from the sad scene. In Mark, the earliest of the narratives, Jesus is brought bound before Pilate, who asks Him the direct question :—" Art thou the King of the Jews ? " This was the only accusation that concerned him as a Roman officer. But the chief priests, driven on by blind fury, heap accusations upon Him. Jesus, except for the enigmatical reply to Pilate " Thou sayeth," remains calm and silent. In the later narrative of Luke, as though to add to the sum of perfidy, the false charge is made that they found this man perverting their nation and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, and saying that He Himself is Christ, a King ; and it adds the unlikely incident of sending Jesus to Herod, tetrarch of Galilee, who was then visiting in Jerusalem.

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Pilate knew well the inflammable spirits of the mad fanatics with whom he had more than once come into conflict and had no wish to gratify their lust for blood. He had marvelled greatly at the quiet dignity of the prisoner. St John brings his wife into the story also as one who had been warned in a dream. It is clear that Pilate saw no justification for the extreme sentence. He wished to chastise Jesus and let Him go. A happy expedient presented itself. On the eve of that day of rejoicing it was customary for the governor to release a condemned prisoner in token of goodwill. Apparently, while the trial was still in progress, certain of the populace, perhaps friends of Jesus, reminded him of the custom, and Pilate asked, "Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews?" And now the fury of the mob, incited by the priests, broke into vehement protests. The cry was raised for the release of a notorious criminal condemned for insurrection and murder, and named in some of the earlier manuscripts "Jesus Barabbas." Pilate was clearly confused. No Roman could understand religious passion; and for these fierce patriots to condemn a rebel against the rule of their oppressors was too great an irony for his belief. "What then shall I do with him whom you call the King of the Jews?" Again the frenzied cries of the maddened multitude fill the air: "Crucify him, Crucify him!" "Why, what evil hath he done?" shouts back the governor. "Crucify him; he made himself equal to Cæsar. Crucify him! If thou let this man go, thou art no friend of Cæsar. Crucify him! We have no King



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but Cæsar.” Thus the storm bellowed and raged, and as the passions rose higher and higher the moral standard sunk lower and lower. At the last, to gratify their hatred, they denied the very substance of their faith—the promises of Jehovah, the messages of their prophets, the glory of their past, the hope and expectation of their future.

What a scene! The highest born, the most pious, learned, and exclusive—men who could not abide the presence of a repentant sinner—raging like infuriated beasts and howling in a delirium of hate.

To Pilate it was an absurd situation. He wished to scourge Jesus and have done with it, but he was not the man to stand against the storm of fanaticism or to risk his own position for the sake of an inoffensive peasant. So before that court the Son of God stood condemned to die the death of a criminal. Then followed a revolting scene, over which the tears of all the generations since have been shed. And yet it was not strange that rude soldiers of the legions should catch the heartless spirit of the ministers of God’s temple. No indignity is wanting to complete the humiliation of that story. Already Christ had been mocked at as a prophet by His own countrymen; now His kingly state was the subject of the heathen ridicule. The soldiers took Him to their own quarters and called their comrades together. They clothed Him in the royal colour, they crowned His head with a chaplet of thorns, they kneeled before Him and saluted Him as King of the Jews; they smote His head with a reed and spit



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upon Him and worshipped Him with cruel mockery. "And they led Him out to crucify Him." Who were these merry-makers? No one will ever know. Who was their victim? The object of the love, the devotion, and the worship of the enlightened world. For Jesus, as a beloved Figure in history, has been lifted up and has drawn all men unto Him.

If we follow the tradition of Mark, these sad events took place in the early morning, and by nine o'clock Jesus, between two thieves, was nailed upon the cross. John, however, follows another rendering of the scene and makes the hour of condemnation twelve o'clock, which would be a more natural time for Simon, the Cyrenean, to be returning from the field. Crucifixion was a form of death imposed by the Romans and introduced into Palestine under their occupation. The law made the carrying of the cross, or at any rate the beam, by the condemned, part of the punishment, but if he faltered through weakness, brought on possibly by the previous scourging, another could be constrained to take up the burden.

Thus the company of the condemned and the Roman guards set forth on the way to Calvary—a place called Golgotha, probably just outside the city walls. The way was long, and Jesus, exhausted by the tumults of the last days, sank under the heavy load. It was then that the services of Simon, who had come from Cyrene in North Africa, were enlisted. We have no direct knowledge, but the mention of his two sons, Alexander and Rufus, implies that he became a member of the Christian

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community, and his sons were well known at the time Mark's gospel was composed. Luke adds that a great multitude of sorrowing friends followed the little procession, and that Jesus addressed them some improbable words.

Before this horrible form of punishment was executed it was customary to drug the victim with a mixture of wine and spice to dull the pain ; but this Jesus refused, as though He meant to pass into the presence of His Father with all His faculties alert. Then His clothes were stripped from Him to become the spoil of the soldiers—and the last act of perfidy was committed. The crime for which the punishment of crucifixion was imposed was always put above the cross, and, perhaps in irony, Pilate had placed the charge against Jesus as the superscription—"The King of the Jews." It was Pilate's feeble revenge for being driven to a loathsome act, and, like all weak men, he was obdurate in maintaining his position in this small matter after having yielded pitifully in the great test.

It was a brutal age, and this act of cruelty was the outcome of brutal passion. In the earliest record there is no evidence of a single sign of sympathy or pity from the onlookers. The fact of the crucifixion was to their minds sufficient proof of guilt. The victim was an impostor. And so the crowd made merry at His expense. Even the chief priests of Jehovah's temple had part in this profound humiliation of our common manhood. They mocked at Him, and since He could save others bade Him now save Himself. If He could destroy the temple

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and rebuild it in three days let Him now come down from the cross and they would believe. Even His companions in misery reproached Him.

The horror of those last scenes had burnt itself into the soul of the early Church, and it is not surprising that legends of nature's awe-inspiring sympathy should have gathered about them. Writing a generation later, Mark records the darkness that fell upon the earth from noon until three o'clock ; and how, as the spirit of Jesus left His body, the veil before the holy place in the temple was rent from top to bottom, signifying the passing of the old dispensation. Matthew was not satisfied to copy this legend of marvels, but added others more marvellous : the earth did quake, rocks were rent, tombs opened and many bodies of saints came to life and appeared in the city. So impressive was this mourning of nature that a Roman officer declared : " Surely this was the Son of God," whatever that could have meant to a Gentile.

The awful drama needed none of these false embellishments. In its simplest form it is overwhelming. For six hours the Son of God hung upon a cross, above the Holy City, an object of derision and contempt. He had refused to be drugged, and through those slow-moving minutes His mind may have struggled with the torment of doubt. At last the long silence was broken by a terrible cry : " My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me ? " His dazed spirit had returned to the memories of childhood, and these words of the twenty-second Psalm, which He had chanted from the Jewish hymn-book

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hundreds of times, came back to comfort Him in His extremity. There were other meanings in this tragic outburst, about which it seems an impertinence to inquire ; but the one which has met us so often before is the deep and strong foundation of the spiritual history of His race, upon which the whole structure of His revelation rested. It vastly enlarges our view of the Christian life if we associate our Lord with the age-long process of man in spiritual understanding and moral achievement. He was not the beginning, nor was he a detached phenomenon. He was the consummation and He came in the fulness of time.

Among those who watched through those dreadful hours were several women, whose names are mentioned. The much later tradition of St John places the mother of Jesus among them, and pictures a tender scene in which the dying Son commends her to the care of the Beloved Disciple. No earlier tradition suggests the presence of any member of the family. Had she been there her cup of sorrow would have been full, for no indignity was wanting to complete the sorrowful picture of divine suffering and of human insensibility. There is something peculiarly revolting in the wagging heads, in the challenging sneers, and in the coarse curiosity of the victorious Pharisees. They went from that heart-breaking scene to celebrate a wonderful festival in memory of Jehovah's love and mercy. They poured forth passionate prayers for guidance and protection, while the outraged body of this Lover of Man lay in a borrowed tomb. The time of

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suffering was mercifully short and it suggests that, in spite of His wearying activities, Jesus was not of a robust physical organization. The agonies of crucifixion were often protracted for days, but in cases of necessity, as in this instance, death was hastened by breaking the bones of the legs. The law required burial on the same day as the death, and no burial must take place at the time of eating the Passover. It was three o'clock when Jesus expired with a terrible cry, and a member of the Sanhedrin, named Joseph, had courage to ask for the body and to give it a fitting burial within a prepared tomb. By that one gracious act this Joseph gained a permanent place in universal history. He was not a disciple, may even have been one of those who passed sentence upon Jesus; but he was not lacking in the deep reverences of the soul towards suffering and death.

About that scene on Calvary the sorrow and remorse of all generations since have borne witness to the love of mankind for the divine Victim. Its profound lessons renew themselves in every age. We know now that the mission of the Son of God could only be fulfilled by a career of suffering and sacrifice that would embrace all the experiences man could ever know. There is no escape from the impression of desolate loneliness through which Jesus was passing in that supreme hour. It haunts the imagination still. There is no least sign of faltering in purpose; but the goal was only won through the passage of extremest agony. It would seem that in the delirium of suffering even His mind was momentarily fog-bound; the sure compass of perfect

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trust no longer served to guide Him. No tragedy of human life can compare with the murkiness of spirit when the guide of faith has left it. Without the light of God ; without the sympathy of man ; the soul, storm tossed in the darkness, drifts helplessly at the mercy of sensation. That is the acutest pain man can experience, and had Christ not known it also He could not have been completely the Saviour of the world.

But in this heart-rending story all human experiences are heightened and magnified, as if they were to be for ever the types of limitless suffering. Friendless, despised, forsaken by human support and inward assurance, Jesus, the Christ, hung upon the cross alone. Then out of the soul of another sufferer, who had endured and triumphed, came the distressful cry of a spirit, wrestling indeed with the powers of darkness, but unconquerable even in the blind struggle : " My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? "

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE RESURRECTION

THE tragedy is finished. A holy Man has wantonly and cruelly been done to death. Jesus of Nazareth has joined the glorious company of those who in the name of God defied the principalities and powers of evil; and fell a victim to His own delusion. "He saved others; himself he cannot save" seemed, at the time, the final judgment of history. As He hung upon the cross, meeting the inevitable fate of His own vast presumption, He appeared the heroic, the lovable, but still the ineffectual Nazarene. He had been a valiant champion of God, and in His extreme need God had forsaken Him. He had even presumed to be the long-expected Messiah, but His claim was not matched by His power. His followers, dazed and baffled by this terrible awakening from their dream, were scattered to their homes. History would place Him among those saintly spirits of whom the world was not worthy, who died in faith, having seen the promises afar off, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Thus history: an unfinished and futile career was brought to an ignominious close.



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It would be interesting to speculate upon the course modern history would have taken if its first judgment of Jesus Christ had been final. One more prophet slain, one more triumph for reaction and wrong, might not have hastened the catastrophe that was overtaking a doomed civilization. But the belief in Christ's resurrection from the dead, and of His triumphant life at the right hand of God, was the one ray of light that lit the pathway of the faithful through centuries of darkness, and the one creative force that inspired the builders of a new heaven and a new earth. Only the strong soul could have kept faith in Christ's redeeming power through those many generations of agonizing life. No moral system, be it ever so admirable ; no teacher of philosophy, whether he be a slave like Epictetus, or a mighty emperor like Marcus Aurelius, could have succoured man in those times of deep distress. Civilization was saved by an unquestioning faith that repudiated the testimony of the senses, that clung desperately to the promises of Christ ; that, in solitude and meditation and prayer gained the long view, and the humble, patient spirit that could till the ground and sow the seed with assurance that in God's good time the harvest would be reaped.

In a conflict so desperate and unequal, their own strength is not sufficient for them. A strong arm must reach down and support them. An old picture has preserved for us the mind of the darkest period of the dark ages. Battling against a tempestuous sea the human race is represented as sinking to its doom. Only the Ark of the Covenant can keep afloat upon

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the angry waves, and within the ark are monks, the chosen ministers of God's grace, who reach down their arms and snatch from destruction the sinking souls who are preordained for eternal life. Against the evils of man's heart only the intercessions of the risen Christ could avail to appease the wrath of God. That submerged world gradually rose out of the sea, and a new epoch of human progress was begun. But Christ had become fixed in Christian thought, not as He appears in history but as the enthroned Judge of the quick and the dead.

When we turn back to the gospel narratives, we are in another atmosphere. The different records are confused and contradictory, but all are charged with electric currents of excitement and exaltation. There are five accounts of this transcendent event. The earliest is that of St Paul in 1 Corinthians xv. 3-8, and the next earliest is that of Mark xvi. 1-8. In this latter narrative, it will be noticed, there is no sign of the risen Lord ; the angel, the open tomb, and the promise of a meeting in Galilee compose the scene. As the story passes through later hands, it becomes more detailed and confused. Luke and John see two angels standing guard, and all excepting Mark make Jesus appear in Jerusalem. Matthew, as was his wont, introduces fearsome portents of earth convulsions, and the supernatural messenger is a glistening figure before whom "the watchers did quake" and "became as dead men." In all this there is no hint that the disciples had even heard the clear predictions of Jesus as to His fate. "They knew not the scripture, that He must rise again

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from the dead." Only a few days before, as He climbed the hill towards Jerusalem, He had foretold His humiliation, suffering, and death (Mark x. 33-34), and had comforted them with the promise that after three days (*i.e.* a little while) He would rise triumphant from the tomb. But, as they had despaired at His death, so they were overwhelmed with amazement and fear by His reappearance.

In all the stories of His meeting with the disciples the figure of Jesus hovers in a softening mist between reality and imagination. He appears and disappears like a ghostly visitant, and yet He walks and talks and eats with little groups as though His physical body was unchanged.

We have the testimony of no eye-witness, unless it be John, as to the actual events of those forty days of wonder, and the reports that were written down many years later leave the mind confused and questioning about many things. Perhaps there was no common tradition of what was seen and heard, but the main fact was already established as an article of faith. Each evangelist, therefore, records certain incidents which had been handed down within the circle of which he was a member. Thus there is a charming story which St Luke alone preserved that helps us to breathe the very atmosphere of those days. Two of the disciples were journeying to a village called Emmaus, recalling the scenes of the awful catastrophe that had befallen them. While they talked of the wonderful event, a stranger drew near and joined them. He asked them why they spoke together so sadly, and one, named Cleopas,

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recounted all the recent happenings in Jerusalem. Then the stranger spoke: "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets had spoken!" and, beginning with Moses, He interpreted all that the prophets had said concerning the suffering and glory of the Messiah. If only that talk could have been preserved the Christian world would have been saved many a pang and doubt. They asked Him to abide with them as the evening was drawing on. Then, as they sat at supper, a wonderful thing happened. He took the bread, and blessed and broke it in some mystical way they may often have seen before. At last their eyes were opened and they knew Him. But at that moment He vanished out of their sight. It was all clear now, and they recalled how their hearts had burned while He explained the scriptures to them as they walked together.

Another of these touching stories is peculiar to St John. A group of the disciples were back again on the familiar shore of the lake of Gennesaret, and, during the night, were at their old trade of fishermen, but had taken nothing. Just before dawn a figure appeared on the water's edge in the half-light and called to them: "Children, have ye aught to eat?" They confessed their ill-fortune. Then the unknown bade them cast their net on the right side of the boat and immediately it was filled with so great a number of fishes that they were not able to draw it. Then John, who is the hero of this document, said to Peter, "It is the Lord." And Peter, still true to his impetuous self, leaped into the sea while the

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others rowed back to land ("for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits") dragging the nets which contained one hundred and fifty and three great fishes and yet the net did not break. They found a fire already built with fishes laid thereon and they sat down to breakfast. It was an embarrassing moment, for they surmised it was the Lord and yet dared not ask. Then Jesus again broke the bread and served the fishes—indicating again how sacred among the apostles was the memory of the simple meals they had shared together. When they had finished, Jesus turned to Peter and said: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" And Peter answered: "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And Jesus said: "Feed my lambs." Twice again was the question pressed upon the agitated apostle, and to each declaration of love Jesus replied, "Feed my sheep," and followed it with an impressive forecast of the manner of Peter's death.

In all the sources we feel the mental tension of those days. The disciples were caught up into that state of exalted emotion (of which modern science has given us a surer knowledge) when the visions men see are far more real to their understanding than the material world about them. Yet in the stories of these shadowy reappearances the picture of the risen Lord keeps true to the portrait already drawn of the earthly Jesus. He is still the strong and patient Master who has guided His disciples hitherto. He has come back to confirm their wavering faith and to comfort their desolate hearts. He appears in their

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hours of need with the same divine understanding and the same tender sympathy that had been their strength and joy while yet they walked together.

But besides the gospels there is another and earlier witness to the fact of the resurrection. One day Jesus of Nazareth, crucified and ascended to God's right hand, appeared to a young man named Saul, on the Damascus road. What this appearance was we do not know, but it is symbolized by light and sound. That startling event gave to Christianity its most original and constructive mind. This young student was no prejudiced witness. He had felt the full force of the outraged feelings of his class towards the new sect and had translated his feeling into vigorous action. He had brooded much over the enigma of life's true aim and purpose, and he had found the solution in strict observance of the law of Moses.

Now, whatever the apparition was that appeared to Saul in a blinding flash of light, his informed and sober mind believed that he had seen the Christ; and that vision cut his life in two. Henceforth his ambitious nature sought to mould itself upon the Christly pattern; sought to spread His teaching, to carry on His mission, and in all ways to emulate His career of love and suffering. He became poor and despised; he knew no honour, comfort, or reward; he toiled incessantly; endured intolerable hardships; suffered from the misunderstandings of his friends and persecution from his enemies. At length he died a martyr's death, and, with joyous anticipation, passed, he believed, into the presence



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of his Master. That is what the resurrection meant to a very superior man ; a man who in earlier life had looked for great rewards in his career. Paul undoubtedly heard the story of these days from the lips of Peter and James and they confirmed his own experience. But the all-important historical fact is that this remarkable leader of men built the whole structure of his faith upon the truth of the resurrection. To him it was the central fact of history, the charter of spiritual liberty and the assurance of immortal life.

The importance of Paul is very great, because he is the first of the witnesses outside the Christian circle, and because of his enormous influence over the thought of many generations of believers. But his experience has been reproduced in millions of devoted and adventurous lives, who have counted all things but loss that they might gain Christ. They were not all saintly persons who found a vocation in religion, but men and women of the world whose souls hungered for enduring realities.

It hardly needs such testimony, which has accumulated through the ages, to bear witness that the Christian faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen"; yet we look to the enlightened soul for illumination in our dark path, just as we look to the enlightened mind to guide us in our ignorance. The distinction of Jesus lies not in the manner nor the originality of His moral teaching, but in His revelation of the divine aim and purpose in creation. Other saintly spirits, in other times, and inspired by other faiths, have



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walked the earth in lowliness and aspired Godwards. But Jesus justified these heavenly strivings by manifesting at each stage of His career the infinite resources of power and joy that are unknown in the natural world. In His own sphere He was the divine realist, His doctrine was not a dream of Utopia but a statement of things as they are. His steadfast insistence upon God's governance was the one possible answer to the enigma of human life. If He did not define the problem of evil, He showed that by overcoming sin man grows into the likeness of God. Life is, by its nature, an unending struggle between the lower and higher forces with which man is endowed. Yet he does not battle alone and unaided against the titanic powers of evil. He falls and is lifted up; he sins and is rescued; he despairs and a sympathizing Friend cheers him on. The end is not death but life eternal. The doctrine of the resurrection is a shout of victory; a challenge to the powers of evil. How Jesus appeared and what He did and said are of little moment compared to the transcendent fact that by the impression He made upon His disciples He brought hope and immortality into the practical life of the world.

Christianity, as we know it, is the full stream that has been fed by the many tributaries that have flowed into it since the first waters left their far distant source. These waters now carry the silt of many religions and civilizations from all lands. The stream has swept majestically through the centuries, gathering volume of power on its way, but it is not now the pure, fresh rivulet that took its rise upon the

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hillside of Galilee. Greece and Rome, Egypt and Persia, the vast, mysterious East, and the savage North have brought something into it. The beliefs, rites, ceremonies and institutions; the philosophy, literature and culture of the Christianity we know are all influenced by the civilizations it has conquered.

Once, in the days of its might, the Monarchical Church spoke with an authoritative voice, but it was not the voice of Christ. To-day that voice is weak and faltering. In making Him a King, Christ's followers took out of our common life the most heroic and lovable and inspiring Friend of man the world has ever known. If ever He is found again it will not be in the schools or temples or palaces, but among the thirsting people for whom He lived and died that they might drink the water of life freely.

Looking down from the plateau of Ravello, as the dusk begins to deepen, one sees in the little hamlets of Majores and Minores, lying just below on the south Italian coast, the lights of the cottages shine bravely forth. It is Thursday of the week, and all the day good housewives have scrubbed and cleaned and laden the tables with their best and opened the doors and put lights in their windows, if perchance on that day the Lord Jesus should come, as the legend had promised, to be their divine guest. It is a touching parable. To such simple faith, to hearts so lovingly prepared and expectant, He will surely come. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.

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